

The Notion of *That Which Depends On Us*
in Plotinus and Its Background

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in Plotinus and Its
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By
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ABBREVIATIONS

ANRW	Temporini, H. & Haase, W. (eds.) (1972–) <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> . Berlin & New York.
CAG	<i>Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca</i> . Reimer, Berlin (1882–1909).
CQ	<i>The Classical Quarterly</i>
DL	Diogenes Laertius
H-S ₁	Henry P. & Schwyzer, H.-R. (eds.) (1951–1973) <i>Plotini Opera</i> , Brussels.
H-S ₂	Henry P. & Schwyzer, H.-R. (eds.) (1964–1982) <i>Plotini Opera</i> , Clarendon press, Oxford.
LP	Sleeman, J. & Pollet, G. (1980) <i>Lexicon Plotinianum</i> , Leiden.
LS	Long, A.A., & Sedley, D.N. (1987) <i>The Hellenistic Philosophers</i> , 2 vols. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
LSJ	Liddell, H.G., Scott, R., and Jones, H.S. (1951) <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , 9th edn., Clarendon Press, Oxford.
OSAP	<i>Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy</i>
PG	Migne, J.P. (ed.) (1857–1866) <i>Patrologia Graeca</i> . Paris.
PGL	Lampe, G.W.H., (1961) <i>A Patristic Greek Lexicon</i> . Oxford. Repr. 2000.
PL	Migne, J.P. (ed.) (1844–1855) <i>Patrologia Latina</i> . Paris. Indexes (1862–1865). Paris.
RE	<i>Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> . Neue Bearb. Stuttgart, 1894–1980.
Rev. Sup.	Liddell, H.G., Scott, R., Jones, H.S. & Glare, P.G.W. (eds.) with the assistance of A.A. Thompson (1996) <i>Greek-English Lexicon: Revised Supplement</i> . Clarendon Press, Oxford.

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Uppsala, March, 2007.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In this Introduction, I will first of all specify the subject of the present study, i.e. Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν and its background.¹ Secondly, I will give a brief outline of the historical-philosophical context and background of the issue of that which depends on us, τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, in ancient philosophy. Thirdly, I will point out some general problems that one faces when approaching this subject, and which I think motivate the kind of terminological approach adopted in the study. Then, I give an outline of the present study, and end with a note on the limitations of the study.

1.1. *The subject of the present study*

This book is an investigation into Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν, his notion of what depends on us. In ancient Greek, this terminology occurs in many different forms of ἐπί + *dativus personae*, variably translated as variants of 'that which depends on us', 'that which is in our power', or 'that which is up to us', or even 'responsibility' or 'freedom'. The strategy adopted in this study then, is to translate the occurrences of this terminology in the ancient texts in a consistent and yet non-specific way, and then to suggest more specific interpretations when analyzing each passage.² Hence, the present study adopts translations in terms of variants of 'depending on', given that they appear to be the ones that to the least extent imply too specific of interpretations.

Given the subject, the natural focus would perhaps seem to be entirely on *Ennead* VI.8[39] which has the Porphyrian title *On the*

¹ I will for the sake of convenience generally speak of 'the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν', even though the texts discussed contain several other forms of ἐπί + *dativus personae* as well. I will sometimes also refer more specifically in terms of the very forms found in a particular passage. Since I give the original Greek or Latin in all cases, it will always be clear what forms we actually do find in these texts.

² All translations in the book are my own unless otherwise indicated.

voluntary and the wish of the One,³ but which in fact deals primarily and at length with the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Plotinus, however, discusses the notion in other treatises as well, notably in *On fate* (III.1[3]); *On numbers* (VI.6[34]); *On well-being* (I.4[46]) and *On providence I* (III.2[47]). Thus, even though a strong focus will be on VI.8, all occurrences in the other treatises will be analyzed as well.

The book is also an investigation into the background of Plotinus' account. The reasons for this are spelled out further ahead in this introduction, but let us state at this point already that the study analyzes specific traits of the notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the different schools or tendencies before Plotinus, in order to find out to what extent Plotinus adopts the notions of either of these traditions, and to what extent he develops them, criticizes them, and goes beyond them.

Given the above description, some readers might still expect that the study would be either an account of Plotinus' theory of some general issue of 'freedom' or 'free will', or simply an exegetical commentary on specific passages that would deal with some such general issue. In fact, however, this study will do neither of these things. The most fundamental reason for not doing so is that it is far from clear—at least not to me—that there is any such general issue of 'freedom', or 'free will' at stake in Plotinus, and that could serve as the subject of such a study. Rather, the assumption that there is appears to be one of the main problems with much of the relevant previous scholarship on Plotinus.⁴

Instead, the present study starts off from the idea that the various themes discussed in the *Enneads* that we would nowadays—perhaps on instinct rather than deciding from some specific criteria—feel motivated to uniformly label 'freedom', 'free will', etc. were in fact back then still separate issues, even though they were naturally in various ways relevant to each other. Notably, one of these issues is the one concerning τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, that which depends on us. It seems to me that these issues not only can, but even ought to—as far as is possible—be studied

³ All references to the text of the *Enneads* refer to the text of H-S². I will refer to the *Enneads* in the conventional way, by using Porphyry's numbering of the treatises, or his titles of them, or both, and Ficino's chapter numbering. Thus, VI.8.[39] means treatise eight of the sixth *Ennead* in Porphyry's edition, which is treatise number 39 according to Porphyry's chronological ordering. Thus, VI.8.2.3. means chapter 2, line 3 of that same treatise.

⁴ On these issues, cf. chapter 2 below. The problem is parallel to the confusion in the interpretation of the Stoic notion of freedom (ἐλευθερία), i.e. as confounded with e.g. Chrysippus' notion of that which depends on us (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν), as is pointed out by Bobzien 1997; 1998a, 330ff. and 1998b, 135.

separately and each one in its own right. The reason is that it is only thus that we may achieve any more detailed understanding of what the ancient philosophers actually were discussing by using these distinct notions. Taking these aspects into concern, the present study chooses to analyze Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν specifically; namely, how he, in criticizing, developing, and merging together different previous notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν then picking up the various intuitions behind them, develops the issues that the notion involved.⁵ Thus, this book aims at spelling out in more detail what Plotinus' contribution to the tradition of writings on τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν really amounts to.

1.2. *The historical-philosophical context of the subject*

The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, studied here in Plotinus, already had a long history in ancient philosophy before his time. Moreover, this is the case for several other related notions that figure in the *Enneads* and that were central in ancient philosophy of action.⁶ Not only were they in Plotinus' time part of common philosophical terminology, but some of them had moreover acquired a topical status of their own within philosophy.

This is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the amount of titles of extant or recorded but lost works produced during the Hellenistic, Imperial, and Late ancient periods containing these notions. It could thus be useful, in order to give a general idea of the context of the writings on τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν in ancient philosophy, to briefly outline not only the tradition of writings on τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν preceding Plotinus, but also some of those dealing with notions and issues that, while distinct from the issue of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, in various ways formed part of the context of the writings on τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

The terminology related to yet distinct from 'that which depends on us' (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, *in nostra potestate*) that I will outline below is then:⁷ self-

⁵ By speaking of 'development' in this study, I simply intend this in the descriptive sense, i.e. that there is an element of change in e.g. the understanding of a notion. I never intend this in a normative sense, i.e. as if a notion would develop to some higher, better or more advanced state.

⁶ By 'ancient philosophy of action' I am not claiming that there was any such separate branch of philosophy, but simply want to indicate in what way these notions were related.

⁷ Baltes-Dörrie 1993, 86–89; 320–327 collect many (primarily Platonist) texts and fragments relevant to this bundle of questions.

determination (τὸ αὐτεξούσιον, *liberum arbitrium*), fate (εἰμασμένη, *fatum*), chance (τύχη, *fortuna*), providence (προνοία, *providentia*), foreknowledge (πρόγνωσις) and divination or prophecy (μαντική, *divinatio*).

As has been pointed out in recent scholarship in relation to some of these notions, there exists an unmotivated interpretative tradition of taking some of them to deal with the very same issue,⁸ even in early Hellenistic philosophy. One explanation for this tendency is probably the fact that they later on, especially in Late Antiquity, standardly figure together in the same works, and in some cases are even explicitly treated as synonyms. I therefore would like to stress that in listing them together in what follows, I do not thereby claim that they are synonyms or involve one and the same problem. Moreover, I make no claim of giving a comprehensive picture of all notions relevant to the issue of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Rather, I simply want to make the point that these notions were all in different ways taken to be relevant to the issue of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, but at the same time they initially depicted distinct issues. In fact, the effort of distinguishing these notions, as far as one can, is an important step in any attempt to understand them as such, and even more so for understanding their different origins and different uses within different authors and philosophical schools. It is moreover necessary if we want to identify their different uses within one and the same author, e.g. when an author is speaking in *propria persona*, and when that author is simply quoting or paraphrasing others. It then seems that it would be suitable already in this introduction to give at least a sketch, if only a brief one, of the peculiarities in origin of these notions as well as their respective developments.

The notion of that which depends on us (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, *in nostra potestate*),⁹ as was said above, is sometimes also translated 'that which is in our power', or 'that which is up to us', or even 'responsibility',¹⁰ or 'freedom'.¹¹

As is well known, the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν has a long history in ancient philosophy before Plotinus' time. Starting as a non-technical notion, it is picked up by philosophers and gradually becomes more technical

⁸ On this tendency, cf. for the case of Plotinus, chapter 2; for the Stoics, chapter 4; and note 4 above.

⁹ The Latin *in nostra potestate* seems to have been established as the standard translation for the philosophical Greek ἐφ' ἡμῖν mainly by Cicero and Seneca. Cf. chapter 4.

¹⁰ E.g. in Sharpley 1983.

¹¹ For the various translations of the notion in Plotinus as well as other ancient authors, cf. chapter 2.

and topicalized. We probably find it in a philosophical context for the first time in Aristotle. He uses expressions such as ἐφ' ἡμῖν and ἐπ' αὐτῷ and other variants of ἐπί + *dativus personae*, in talking of an action 'depending on' the agent. In Aristotle such expressions are used primarily in an attempt to explain the grounds for the moral and legal distinctions between voluntary and involuntary actions. However, Aristotle does not take the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as such as an issue in need of clarification, which perhaps explains why he makes a somewhat unsystematical use of the notion.¹²

The notion was first discussed as an issue and given a more technical account by the Stoic Chrysippus in his attempt to show that his theory of fate, while containing the so-called fate principle that *everything happens in accordance with fate*, was compatible with common intuitions about agents as being the causes of their actions.¹³

After the rather technical account in Chrysippus, the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν came to depict a central topic in Hellenistic and Imperial period philosophy, one on which most philosophers seem to have written, though the notion was understood and developed in quite different ways by different schools.

That the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν really came to depict a distinct philosophical topic, on which different schools and philosophers disagreed, is perhaps most clearly shown by the impressive number of philosophical works, extant or lost, of which the very title refers to the notion. Among these sources we find works by most schools and tendencies. We find Middle Platonists,¹⁴ Neoplatonists¹⁵ and Roman Stoics,¹⁶ as well as Peripatetic¹⁷ examples.

¹² On Aristotle's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, cf. pp. 45–61.

¹³ On Chrysippus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, cf. pp. 82–97 below, and Bobzien 1998a, 330 ff.

¹⁴ Middle-Platonist examples are Plutarch's (lost) book *Περὶ τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῖν πρὸς τοὺς Στωϊκούς* (*On that which depends on us against the Stoics*), Lamprias-cat., nr. 154. Cf. Baltes-Dörrie 1993, 86; 321; Plutarch's (lost) book *Περὶ τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῖν πρὸς Ἐπίκουρον* (*On that which depends on us against Epicurus*), Lamprias-cat., nr. 133. Cf. Baltes-Dörrie 1993, 86; 321 f.; Maximus of Tyre's *εἰ μαντικῆς οὐσίας, ἔστιν τι ἐφ' ἡμῖν* (*Whether, if divination exists, there is anything depending on us*), (*Diss.* 13, 109–117 Trapp=pp.158,1–170,4 Hobein). Cf. Baltes-Dörrie 1993, 88; 325 ff. Written c. AD 180, cf. Trapp 1997, xif.

¹⁵ After Plotinus we find Porphyry's (partly extant) *Περὶ τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῖν* (*On that which depends on us*) in Stob.II.8.39(163.16–167.7) Wachsmuth-Hense=P.37(fg. 268–270) Smith.

¹⁶ E.g. some of Epictetus' *Discourses: Diss.* I.1. *Περὶ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν* (*On the things which depend on us and the things which do not depend on us*), and *Diss.* III.24. *Περὶ τοῦ μὴ δεῖν προσπιάσχειν τοῖς οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν* (*That we ought not to yearn for the things which do not depend on us*).

¹⁷ Peripatetic examples are Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De fato*, i.e. *Πρὸς τοὺς αὐτο-*

In addition, however, the notion is discussed in many other texts as well, i.e. texts not referring to the notion in their titles. In these latter kind of sources we find contributions, and traces of contributions, from practically all of the philosophical schools and movements of the time, such as Early Stoics¹⁸ and Roman Stoics,¹⁹ Peripatetics,²⁰ Middle Platonists,²¹ Neoplatonists,²² Early Christians,²³ and other more eclectic²⁴ contributions.²⁵

Some significant aspects of the development of this notion should be noted here already. First, the notion was not originally, i.e. when

κράτορας περί τε εἰμαρμένης καὶ τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῶν (*To the emperors on fate and that which depends on us*) dated between 198 and 211 AD, cf. Sharples 2001, 513.

¹⁸ The early Stoic notions, presumably Chrysippus', are reported in later sources, i.e. Cicero (1st cent. BC), Plutarch (1st–2nd cent. AD), Aulus Gellius (2nd cent. AD), and Alexander of Aphrodisias (end of 2nd cent. AD), then Clement of Alexandria (2nd–3rd cent. AD) and Plotinus and Origen (middle of 3rd cent. AD), then Nemesius and Eusebius (4th cent. AD). Cf. pp. 82–97.

¹⁹ E.g. in Seneca (i.e. Lat. *in nostra potestate*) both in the *Dialogues* and the *Letters*; and in Musonius, *Fr.* 38 Hense (=Stob. *Ecl.* II.8.30 Wachsmuth-Hense); in Epictetus, throughout his works (who is also quoted in Stobaeus' anthology of passages 'concerning that which depends on us' (Stob. II.8.22, 23, 27, 30 Wachsmuth-Hense)); and in Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* written during his emperorship (161–180). Cf. chapter 4.

²⁰ Peripatetic examples are the two earliest extant commentaries on *EN*: Aspasius' *In EN* (early 2nd century AD) and the Anonymous' *In EN II–V* (late 2nd century AD). In addition to Alexander's *De fato*, it is found in Alexander's Aristotle commentaries, i.e. *In Metaph.*; *In An. prior.*; *In Top.* as well as his *De Anima* and the four works usually referred to as the *Mantissa*; *Quaestiones* (*Ἀπορίαι καὶ λύσεις*); *Ἠθικά προβλήματα*; and *Problemata*. Cf. chapter 3.

²¹ E.g. in several works by Philo of Alexandria, and by Plutarch, in Alcinoüs' *Ἀδασκαλικὸς τῶν Πλάτωνος δογμάτων* (*The Handbook of Platonism*), written c. 150 AD, cf. Whittaker-Louis 1990, xiii; in Ps.-Plutarch's *De fato*. Reports are also found in Nemesius of Emesa's *De natura hominis*, Calcidius' *In Tim.*, and Apuleius' *De Platone*. Cf. chapter 5. Also cf. Bobzien 1998b, 146ff.

²² E.g. in Plotinus' *On fate* (III.1[3]); *On numbers* (VI.6[34]); *On the voluntary and the wish of the One* VI.8.[39]; *On well-being* (I.4[46]) and *On providence I* (III.2[47]); in Porphyry, in many places in the *Quaest. ad Iliadem*, *Quaest. ad Odysseam*, in *Ep. ad Anebonem* II.13a1, II.16a4 Sodano; in Proclus who discussed it extensively in *In Rem Publicam*, *In Alcibiadem I* (cf. Westerink 1954), *In Tim.*; *Dub. c. providentiam*, and the *De providentia et fato et eo quod in nobis*; in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*, and in Simplicius' *In Epict. Ench.*

²³ E.g. in Origen's *Contra Celsum*, *De principiis*, *De oratione*, *Philocalia*, *In Genesim* and many other works of his. Also in Nemesius of Emesa's *De natura hominis*, written between 390 and 400, cf. Verbeke & Moncho 1975, v; and Gregory of Nyssa's *Contra fatum* and other works of his.

²⁴ More eclectic yet important texts discussing others' views, yet not indicating which ones they defend, are Cicero's *De fato*.

²⁵ Though Epicurus did not use the notion as such, his uses of related notions are reported in *DL* 10.133. Cf. *LS* 20C1, 8–9. According to Dobbin 1998, 65 he e.g. 'used the phrases *to par' hēmas*, *to di' hēmōn autōn*, and *to ex hēmōn autōn* synonymously'.

introduced by Aristotle, discussed in relation to any theory of fate (εἵμαρμένη), since he naturally had no theory of fate in the strict sense. However, after Chrysippus' use of it in his account of fate, it was from then onwards to be closely associated with theories of fate throughout Antiquity. Notably, this association becomes striking in the debates about the implications of the Stoic theory of fate, and the attempts within the other schools to develop better theories of fate.²⁶ Thus we find the Aristotle commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias treating the notion as closely linked to the theory of fate, and actually writing an entire treatise on how it fits into what he takes to be Aristotle's view of fate.²⁷

Secondly, neither Aristotle nor Chrysippus had associated it with any theory of psychological freedom (ἐλευθερία),²⁸ as a feature of the soul of the agent leading the perfect life. Later on, however, particularly the Roman Stoics Seneca, Musonius and his pupil Epictetus brought together and discussed these previously separate topics and notions in one and the same context.²⁹ From then onwards they came to be associated in the works of numerous other writers as well.

Thirdly, the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν was also later on to become closely associated with,³⁰ explained in terms of,³¹ and finally taken to be synonymous with³² the notion of τὸ αὐτεξούσιον, to which we shall now turn.

The notion of self-determination (τὸ αὐτεξούσιον), and its variants, sometimes also translated as 'independence', or as 'freedom', is usually taken to have its origin in non-philosophical contexts, where the attribute αὐτεξούσιος depicts the status of released prisoners of war, or describes God's unchallengeable power.

Though it is not always evident on what grounds especially lexical sources,³³ as well as more recent commentators,³⁴ tend to class some of these uses as non-philosophical, the evidence indicates that the notion

²⁶ Cf. Bobzien 1998a, *Introd.* ch. 7 & *passim* for an analysis of these debates.

²⁷ Cf. pp. 72–79.

²⁸ Cf. Bobzien 1998a, ch. 7 and Frede, D. 1993, 200.

²⁹ Cf. chapter 4.

³⁰ In e.g. Epictetus' *Diss.* cf. section 4.4.

³¹ In e.g. Alexander's *De fato*. cf. section 3.4.

³² E.g. in Nemesius of Emesa's *NH.* ch. 39, including the title as well as the text at 311,7ff.

³³ Cf. the entries in especially *PGL*; but also *LSJ* p. 279 with the *Rev. Supp.* p. 60; and for Plotinus *LP* with Grant 1968. Cf. also Chantraine 1968 and Gercke 1886, 269ff.

³⁴ E.g. in Harl 1960, *passim*; Gauthier & Jolif 1959, 217; Zierl 1995, 186.

originally must have been a legal or political notion that was introduced sometime during the 1st century BC, and that after a while was adopted by philosophers.³⁵ Though understood in quite different ways in different philosophical schools, it was soon established as common philosophical terminology, perhaps by the Roman Stoics Musonius and his pupil Epictetus. It was moreover soon established as the standard synonym for *liberum arbitrium* in philosophical Latin.³⁶ This is also visible in Late ancient and Medieval translations of Greek philosophical texts and discussions.³⁷

Its establishment as general philosophical terminology is evident from the ancient sources, where we find the notion in texts by Peripatetics³⁸ and Stoics.³⁹ We also find it in Middle Platonists,⁴⁰ and even

³⁵ E.g. Gauthier & Jolif 1959, 217 locates the first philosophical use of αὐτεξούσιος to Epictetus, as does Kahn 1988, 250, n. 21 and Bobzien 1998, 355; Bonhöffer 1911, 238 locates it to Musonius, as does Harl 1960, xxviii; Telfer 1957, 123ff. locates it to Chrysippus, as does Harder, Beutler & Theiler 1967, 360; Zierl 1995, 186 locates it to Zeno and Chrysippus. Rieth 1933, 133 thinks it was absent in the Stoa. The main basis for the early attributions is an attribution of it to earlier stoics by Hippolytus, granted as a fragment by von Arnim at *SVF* II.975, but questioned by Bobzien 1998a, 355, n. 74.

³⁶ As pointed out already by e.g. Rieth 1933, 133. Among those ancient sources explicitly making this translation we find Tertullian (writing after AD 200) rendering αὐτεξούσιος by *libera arbitrii potestas* at *De anima* 21.6. Waszink. Jerome (c. AD 342–420), renders αὐτεξούσιος by *liberum arbitrium* at *Adversus Pelagianos* 3.7. *PL* Migne. Cf. also Augustine's *De libero arbitrio* (written 388–395) where we find not only *voluntas* and *liberum arbitrium*, but also *liberum arbitrium voluntatis* (*DLA* 2.1.1. and *passim*) and *libera voluntas* (*DLA*, 2.1.3, five times), which according to e.g. Kahn 1988 is only an abbreviation of *liberum arbitrium voluntatis*. However, to what extent Augustine's Latin terminology here might have taken over specific connotations from the Greek, is not yet entirely clear. *Libera voluntas* is also found in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* II, cf. Kahn 1988, 248.

³⁷ E.g. in Moerbeke's translation of Alexander's *De fato*, (c. 1258 and 1278, cf. Thillet 1963, 22ff., 62), τὸ αὐτεξούσιον is translated as *liberum arbitrium*, in the same manner but adding a transcription as *autexusion, hoc est liberum arbitrium*, and also as *propria potestas*. Cf. Thillet 1963, 118ff. Thillet 1963, 52–53 explains these and others of Moerbeke's 'analytical translations' in terms of the lack of possibility in Latin to form composite words. For an overview of the translations of the *De fato*, cf. Thillet 1984, cxxxviff. Also, in the (2nd) Latin translation of Nemesius of Emesa's *De natura hominis* in 1165 by Burgundio of Pisa (Verbeke & Moncho, 1975, lxxxviii), αὐτεξούσιος is translated as *liber arbitrii*; thirteen times simply as *arbitrio*. τὸ αὐτεξούσιον is translated eleven times as *liberum arbitrium*, and εἰμὶ αὐτεξούσιος is translated as *est in meo libero arbitrio*. Cf. Verbeke & Moncho 1975, 198, 229.

³⁸ Peripatetic examples are found in the Anonymous' *In EN II–V*, and in Alexander's *De fato*.

³⁹ Whether it is found in Early or Middle Stoics is doubtful (cf. note above). Later on, we find it in Musonius, *Diss.* 12 & 16, and in Epictetus, *Diss.* II.2.3.1, IV.1.56.2; 1.62.2; 1.68.1; 1.100.3.

⁴⁰ E.g. in Philo of Alexandria, *LA* 3.73.3; *Cher.* 88.3; *Post.* 115.1; *Plant.* 46.4; *Ebr.* 44.1;

more frequently in Neoplatonists.⁴¹ Finally it also becomes adopted by Christians.⁴²

As was stated above, a significant point of development of the notion is its association with the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The Roman Stoic Epictetus is probably the first one to see it as closely related to yet clearly distinct from the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.⁴³ The Aristotelian Alexander of Aphrodisias is, however, the first one to clearly state that τὸ αὐτεξούσιον is what the notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν actually refers to.⁴⁴ Later on, these notions appear to have become more or less synonymous.⁴⁵

The notion of fate (εἰμασμένη, *fatum*) was brought into a philosophical context by Plato, particularly in the *Laws*,⁴⁶ where he talks in terms of things happening 'according to the order and law of fate'.⁴⁷

Aristotle, although discussing many issues which later on were discussed under the heading of 'fate', did not have a clearcut theory of fate as such. During the Hellenistic period, more detailed theories of fate were developed. Notably, the debates concerning the interpretation of the fate principle, i.e. that *everything happens according to fate*, defended at length in particular by the Stoic Chrysippus, established fate as one of the most fruitful topics in philosophy.

Thus we find many contributions by Platonists and especially Middle Platonists,⁴⁸ who developed a distinctive theory of their own

Heres. 85.4; *Heres.* 301.6; *Jos.* 148.5; *Spec.* 1.14.2; *Spec.* 2.82.1; *Virt.* 210.1; *Prob.* 57.6; *Legat.* 183.2; *Q. Gen.* 4.51b.11; and in Maximus of Tyre, *Diss.* 13.

⁴¹ In Plotinus, e.g. *Enn.* I.4; III.2; IV.3; IV.8; V.1; and frequently in VI.8.

⁴² E.g. in Methodius of Olympus; in Origen; in Hippolytus. Cf. the extensive references in *PGL*.

⁴³ Cf. section 4.4.

⁴⁴ Cf. section 3.4.

⁴⁵ E.g. in Nemesius of Emesa's *NH.* ch. 39, including the title as well as the text at 311,7ff.

⁴⁶ On the topic of fate in ancient philosophy, cf. Bobzien 1998a, 2–10 & *passim* with a special focus on Chrysippus; Sharples 1983, 3–29 with a special focus on Alexander; Also, cf. Valgiglio 1967, *passim* & Valgiglio 1964 & 1993, *Introd.* For an outline of ancient philosophical views of fate, cf. Magris 1985, and for pre-philosophical views Magris 1984.

⁴⁷ *Leg.* 904c9 Burnet: κατὰ τὴν τῆς εἰμασμένης τάξιν καὶ νόμον. Some passages in Plato dealing with fate are briefly discussed in section 5.2.

⁴⁸ The first Platonist example is Xenocrates of Chalkedon (396–314 BC), Speusippus' successor as head of the Academy in 339 BC, who is said to have written a (now lost) book *On fate* (DL 4,12=fg.2 Isnardi Parente). Later on we have Plutarch's (lost) *Περὶ εἰμασμένης βιβλία β'* (*On fate, two books*, Lamprias cat. nr. 58), cf. Baltes-Dörrie 1993, 86; 321. For the possible content of Xenocrates' and Plutarch's two (lost) works, cf. Babut 1969, 298ff.; 307ff. The first extant work is Ps.-Plutarch's *Περὶ εἰμασμένης* (*On fate*), cf. Baltes-Dörrie 1993, 88; 324f.; Valgiglio 1964, xxxixff. & 1993; Moraux 1984, II.495 and

on the subject, of which we find traces in several sources.⁴⁹ Moreover, the Neoplatonists, including Plotinus, wrote on fate at length in various works.⁵⁰ Particularly important contributions were made by early as well as later Stoics.⁵¹ In the Roman Stoa we find no work on fate, but numerous accounts of fate in other contexts.⁵² Though Aristotle had no theory of fate himself, later Aristotelians, especially in the light of the Stoic theories, developed detailed theories of fate, naturally drawing on various works of Aristotle, but also being influenced by elements of the rival schools.⁵³ We also find works by

Ziegler 1951, 725f. De Lacy & Einarson 1959, 304 ascribe it to an unknown Platonist dating it 'not before the first decades of the second century,' (AD). Cf. also Valgiglio 1964, xxxvf. On the argument of the text, cf. De Lacy & Einarson 1959, 303–309; Valgiglio 1964, ixff; Dörrie 1977, 79ff.; Moraux 1984, II.496ff.; Theiler 1966b and Gercke 1886; Alcinous' *Didascalicus* ch. XXVI. Cf. Whittaker 1990, 51ff.; 133ff.

⁴⁹ The main sources of this theory are Ps.-Plutarch's *De fato*, Nemesius of Emesa's *De natura hominis*, Calcidius's *In Timaeum*, Alcinous' *Didascalicus*, and Apuleius' *De Platone*. Cf. section 5.5.

⁵⁰ Plotinus' *Enn.* III.1 [3] *Περὶ εἰμαρμένης* (*On fate*) cf. Armstrong 1967, 6f.; Bréhier 1956, 3–5; Harder-Beutler-Theiler B.I.b, 408–419. In the 4th cent. AD we find Iamblichus' *Ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς Μακεδόνην περὶ εἰμαρμένης*, Stob.II.8.43–48 Wachsmuth-Hense. Fate is also discussed in Iamblichus' *De mysteriis*.

⁵¹ Stoic examples are Zeno, founder of the Stoa, who developed a theory of fate, but wrote no work on fate. Chrysippus wrote a work *Περὶ εἰμαρμένης* (*On fate*), containing two books, reported on by Eusebius *Praep. Evang.* 6.8.1ff., quoting Diogenianus the Peripatetic. The work might be the indirect basis of parts of the account of Chrysippus' view of fate in Cic. *De fato* 39–45, cf. Bobzien 1998a, 236ff. According to A. Gellius, *NA* VII.1–2, Chrysippus also discussed fate in his *On providence*, cf. Bobzien 1998a, 3; a Stoic Boethus is reported (in DL 7.149) to have written two (lost) books on fate. Also Panaetius' pupil Posidonius (c. 135–151 AD) is reported (in DL 7.149) to have written two books on fate. Hierocles (fl. c. AD 100) is ascribed a (lost) work *Περὶ προνοίας καὶ εἰμαρμένης καὶ τῆς τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῶν πρὸς τὴν θεϊαν ἡγεμονίαν συντάξεως* (*On providence and fate and the combination of what depends on us and divine omnipotency*), in Photius *Bibl.* 214.171b.19–21 Henry. The Stoic Philopator is ascribed a (lost) work *Περὶ εἰμαρμένης* (*On fate*) in Nemesius *NH* xxxv 293.106.9–10 Morani. De Lacy & Einarson 1959, 304, n. d) dates it to the 1st half of the 2nd cent. AD.

⁵² Within the Roman Stoa there are no works on fate as such, but frequent mentions of fate, e.g. in Seneca's, *Prov* 5.7, *Ep* 101.7, *Marc* 21.6, *Nat. quaest.* II.34–38; in Cornutus' *Epid.* 13, cf. Lapidge 1989, 1402f. & Most 1989; in Musonius *fr.* 43 Hense=Stob. IV 44.60; in Epictetus' *Ench.* 53.1, *Diss.* II.23.42, III.22.95, IV.1.131, IV.4.34 and in Marcus Aurelius *Med.* 2.2–3, 12.2.2.

⁵³ E.g. the otherwise unknown Peripatetic Polyzelus' *Περὶ εἰμαρμένης* (*On fate*), mentioned in Alex. *Mantissa* 186.30. Cf. Theiler 1966b, 71; 81f.; Alexander of Aphrodisias' *Πρὸς τοὺς αὐτοκρατοράς περὶ τε εἰμαρμένης καὶ τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῶν* (*To the emperors On fate and that which depends on us*, i.e. *De fato*) dated between 198 and 211 AD. Cf. Sharples 2001, 513. Fate is also discussed at length in the (spurious) *Mantissa* and the (spurious) *Quaestiones* (*Ἀπορίαι καὶ λύσεις*). It re-occurs in the *De Mixtione*, the Aristotle commentaries *In Top.*, *In Meteor.*, and in the (spurious) *Problemata*. Cf. chapter 3.

Sceptics,⁵⁴ Epicureans,⁵⁵ Cynics,⁵⁶ and Christians.⁵⁷

As has been pointed out in the secondary literature,⁵⁸ the various topics that later on were discussed under the heading of ‘fate’ were originally independent problems within different areas of philosophy. The topic of fate became fully established in the late 2nd century BC, and remained a central topic within philosophy through the 3rd century AD.⁵⁹ However, given both the length of the period during which it flourished as a topic, and the different perspectives of the writers of different schools, it is not surprising that we find much variation among the numerous works produced, not only in style of writing, but as to what elements and particular problems related to fate are brought up, and indeed, as to the level of sophistication of the arguments.⁶⁰

The notion of chance (τύχη, *fortuna*), was brought into ethical contexts already by Aristotle in *EN* III.⁶¹ The notion is then later on found in close association with the notions of ἐφ’ ἡμῶν and fate, where they in some writers form a mutually exclusive and altogether comprehensive account of the kinds of causes there are. In such cases, ‘that which happens through chance’ is distinguished from ‘that which happens through fate’, and ‘that which depends on us’ is distinguished further from these two. This is particularly clear in Middle-Platonist sources, where we also find specific treatises about it.⁶²

⁵⁴ The Academic Sceptic Carneades (c. 214–129 BC) is reported by Cic. *De fato* 23, to have criticized Chrysippus’ and Epicurus’ views of fate. Cicero’s *De fato* (written 44 BC) should perhaps in its own right be grouped among the Sceptic approaches to the subject.

⁵⁵ Epicurean examples include: Epicurus’ (lost) *Περὶ εἰμαρμένης* (*On fate*), mentioned in Philodemus’ *On Piety*, 1063–1064 Obbink. The Epicurean Diogenianus is ascribed a work on fate in Eus. *PE* 6.8.

⁵⁶ The Cynic Oenomaus is ascribed a work on fate in Eus. *PE* 6.7.

⁵⁷ E.g. Tertullian in the second half of the 2nd century AD wrote a (lost) work on fate, cf. Bobzien 1998a. Bardesanes, c. 154–222 AD, is also ascribed a Dialogue *On fate*, (in Eus. *PE* 6.9, who also gives a Greek fragment, although of the treatise as a whole only the original Syriac version is extant). Since Bardesanes is one of the main interlocutors of the Dialogue, it is most likely by a pupil of his. Origen is also ascribed a work on fate (in Eus. *PE* 6.11). Eusebius also writes *in propria persona* on fate, in *PE* 6.5–6. Later on, in the 4th cent. AD, Gregory of Nyssa wrote a work *κατὰ εἰμαρμένης* (*Against fate*) according to Photius *Bibl.* 223 Henry. Diodorus of Tarsus is ascribed eight books *κατὰ εἰμαρμένης* (*Against fate*) in Photius *Bibl.* 223 Henry.

⁵⁸ Cf. Bobzien 1998a, 2.

⁵⁹ Cf. Bobzien 1998a, 4.

⁶⁰ This is pointed out by Bobzien 1998a, 4.

⁶¹ On chance in *EN* III, see chapter 3 below.

⁶² The tri-partition is most explicit in Plutarch, cf. chapter 5 below. Middle-Platonist

The notion of providence (πρόνοια, *providentia*), seems to originally have been mainly a legal notion of forethought, or premeditation.⁶³ As for the philosophical development of this notion into a more technical notion of divine providence, we only find elements of such a theory of providence in Plato, mainly in *Laws* X.⁶⁴ Aristotle, on the other hand, did not have a theory on the subject.⁶⁵ The Early Stoics made it central to their physics, and typically identified it with fate.⁶⁶ Also, the Roman Stoics wrote treatises on the subject.⁶⁷ The Middle Platonists developed a rather complex theory on the topic,⁶⁸ and several of the Neoplatonists wrote extensively on the subject.⁶⁹ In spite of the lack of a theory of providence in Aristotle, we also find later Aristotelian works on providence.⁷⁰

works on chance include: Plutarch's *Περὶ τύχης* (*De fortuna*, 97c–100a). Cf. Baltes-Dörrie 1993, 86; 322 & Babbitt 1962, 74–88; Plutarch's (extant) *Περὶ τῆς Ῥωμαίων τύχης* (*De fortuna Romanorum*, nr. 20, 316c–326c). Cf. Nachstadt 1971, 43–74 & Ziegler 1951, 719f. Plutarch's (extant) *Περὶ τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρου τύχης ἢ ἀρετῆς* (*De Alexandri magni fortuna aut virtute*, nr. 21a–b, 326d–345b). Cf. Nachstadt 1971, 75–120 & Ziegler 1951, 721f.

⁶³ On this notion of πρόνοια cf. Loomis 1972 and in relation to philosophical discussions of voluntary and involuntary actions, e.g. in Aristotle, cf. Irwin 1980, and Lee 1937. On the ancient philosophical discussions of divine providence in general cf. Sharples 2003 and (with a focus on Imperial period philosophy) Dragona-Monachou 1994.

⁶⁴ On the theory of providence in Plato, in *Laws* X (899d7–903d10), cf. Thillet 2003, 17 & Bréhier's *Introduction to Enn.* III.2–3 *ad loc.*

⁶⁵ Aristotle produced nothing on the subject, although things he did say formed the elements of the later Peripatetic theories, cf. Thillet 2003, 16–26.

⁶⁶ E.g. Chrysippus' treatise (in at least 4 books) *Περὶ προνοίας* (*On providence*), quoted in Aulus Gellius, *NA* VII.1 ff.

⁶⁷ E.g. Epictetus: *Diss.* I.6.t. *Περὶ προνοίας* (*On providence*); *Diss.* I.16.t. *Περὶ προνοίας* (*On providence*); *Diss.* III.17.t. *Περὶ προνοίας* (*On providence*); in Latin, Seneca's dialogue *De Providentia*. Cf. Reynolds 1977, 1–17 & Dionigi 1994.

⁶⁸ E.g. Philo of Alexandria's two books *Περὶ Προνοίας* (*On providence*, book I preserved in Armenian only, book II also partly in Greek fragments, mainly in Eus. *PE*, cf. Hadas-Lebel 1973, 17 ff. & Colson 1941, 447 ff.; 541 ff.); and Atticus *fr.* 3 Des Places. On the sources to the general Middle-Platonist theory of providence, cf. Sharples 2003.

⁶⁹ E.g. in Plotinus' *Enn.* III.2[47] *Περὶ προνοίας πρώτον* (*On providence I*); *Enn.* III.3[48] *Περὶ προνοίας δεύτερον* (*On providence II*), originally forming one treatise, divided in two by Porphyry. Cf. Armstrong *ad loc.*, 38–41; Bréhier 1956, 17–23 & Harder-Beutler-Theiler 1960, B.V.b, 330–367. Baltes-Dörrie 1993, 326 also mentions Porphyry's *Against Nemertios*; Proclus' *De Providentia*; Iamblichus, who wrote no work specifically on providence, yet discussed it in various texts. Cf. Dalsgaard-Larsen 1972a, 50.

⁷⁰ E.g. in Alexander's *Περὶ προνοίας*. (*On providence*) cf. Thillet 2003. Cf. also Alexander's *De fato*, ch. xvii. For an overview of the subject from Antiquity to Arabic philosophy with a focus on Alexander, as well as a useful bibliography, cf. Thillet 2003, 16–79 & 153 ff.

While the works on providence dealt with the nature and consequences of a divine good order embracing all things, the works on the notion of foreknowledge (πρόγνωσις), rather dealt with down-to-earth issues such as the possibilities of foreseeing the future, particularly one's own. We find Middle-Platonist contributions⁷¹ and Aristotelian contributions,⁷² as well as Neoplatonist ones.⁷³

Though problems about future contingents more specifically were obviously touched upon in other contexts in ancient philosophy, notably in commentaries in the more strict sense on e.g. Aristotle's *De interpretatione* and other works, the topic of divine foreknowledge and the philosophical reflection as regards the foreknowledge (πρόγνωσις) given through oracles seems to have become a topic primarily in the Middle Platonists and in Alexander of Aphrodisias, after whom we find numerous works on the subject.

Moreover, closely related to the issue of foreknowledge, and related to the issue of providence as well, we find writings dealing with divination or prophecy (μαντική, *divinatio*). Divination seems to have been one of the elements of traditional religion that was acknowledged as phenomena every philosophical theory on a related topic had to make room for. We thus find Middle-Platonist,⁷⁴

⁷¹ E.g. Plutarch's *Ei ἡ τῶν μελλόντων πρόγνωσις ὠφέλιμος* (*Whether the foreknowledge of things to come is helpful*) Stob. III.207.1–2 Wachsmuth-Hense=fg. 21–23 Sandbach. Cf. Baltes-Dörrie 1993, 88; 322f. He also discusses it in *De E ap. Delphos* 387.B.3; *Pythiae oraculis* 399.D.7; *Soll. anim.* 979.A.8, 979.E.3, and 982.C.8.

⁷² E.g. in Alexander's *De fato*, ch. xxx–xxxii. (200.26, 200.27, 201.16 Bruns), and in the spurious *Quaestiones* (Ἀπορίαι καὶ λύσεις) 66.35.

⁷³ E.g. in Porphyry, *Ep. ad Anebonem*, 2.5b3, 2.18d5, 2.18d9; Iamblichus' *De mysteriis* 3.19.26, 3.24.17, 3.24.19, 3.30.38, 6.4.14, 10.3.7, 10.4.9, *De vita Pythagorica* 19.93.4, 28.147.4, 28.147.9.

⁷⁴ Platonist examples are Plutarch's *Περὶ μαντικῆς* (*On divination*) Stob. IV.414.8 Wachsmuth-Hense=fg. 147 Sandbach. Cf. Baltes-Dörrie 1993, 86; 322f.; Plutarch's *Περὶ μαντικῆς ὅτι σώζεται κατὰ τοὺς Ἀκαδημαϊκούς* (*On divination, which according to the Academians helps*, Lamprias-cat. nr. 71). Cf. Baltes-Dörrie 1993, 86; 322f.; Plutarch's *Περὶ τοῦ μὴ μάχεσθαι τῇ μαντικῇ τὸν Ἀκαδημαϊκὸν λόγον* (*That the Academician teaching does not refute divination*, Lamprias-cat. nr. 131); Plutarch's *Περὶ μαντείας β'* (*On Divination*, two books) cf. Ziegler 1951, 702. Later, Maximus of Tyre's *Ei μαντικῆς οὐσης τι ἐφ' ἡμῖν*. (*Whether, if prophecy exists, there is anything depending on us*, *Or.* 13 Trapp=S.158,1–170,4 Hobein). Cf. Baltes-Dörrie 1993, 88; 325ff. Texts on specific oracles include Plutarch's (extant) *Περὶ τῶν ἐκλελοιπότεων χρηστηρίων* (*On the remaining Oracles*, nr. 26). Cf. Baltes-Dörrie 1993, 88; 323. Plutarch's *Περὶ τοῦ μὴ χρᾶν νῦν ἔμμετρα τὴν Πυθίαν* (*On why the Pythia does not now give oracles in verse*), nr. 25. Cf. Baltes-Dörrie 1993, 88; 324. The two lost works of Plutarch: *Χρησμῶν συναγωγή* (*Collection of Oracles*, Lamprias-cat. nr. 171) and *Περὶ τῆς εἰς Τροφῶνιον καταβάσεως* (*On the Trophonian ascent*), Lamprias-cat. nr. 181. Baltes-Dörrie 1993, 324.

Stoic,⁷⁵ and Aristotelian contributions,⁷⁶ as well as some more eclectic ones,⁷⁷ all showing the general interest in these issues.

1.3. *Why a terminological approach is suitable for the subject*

In studying the various notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, i.e. in different texts from different schools and periods, one has to be aware of several problems pertaining to the study of this topic as such. I will therefore in what follows point out the most relevant ones.

The perhaps largest problem with interpreting the texts concerning the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is the difficulty of avoiding inaccurate or even misleading translations and paraphrases. The most common way of blurring the very issue at stake in a given text is translating or paraphrasing the term ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and its variants as 'freedom', 'free choice', 'free will' etc. Presumably, this is often done on the assumption that this is what modern philosophers would be talking about if they were to write anything like what the Ancients wrote when discussing the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

This is indeed a general problem regarding much of the related terminology, including the notions discussed in the previous section. Particularly though, as regards the term ἐφ' ἡμῖν, translating it and its variants, as is often done, as 'freedom,' or 'free choice', as well as by the corresponding terms in other modern languages, sometimes even unsystematically, makes it practically impossible to then discern differences between different notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν within a writer or a philosophical school, as well as between different writers and different philosophical schools.⁷⁸

One explanation for this tendency, as was hinted above, might be the fact that many of the sources to especially Hellenistic philosophy consist

⁷⁵ Stoic examples are Epictetus' *Diss.* II.7.t. *Πῶς μαντευτέον*. (*How to employ divination*) & *Ench.* 32.

⁷⁶ Peripatetic examples include Alexander's *De fato*, ch. xxx–xxxii on divine foreknowledge and prophecy.

⁷⁷ A more eclectic example is Cicero's *De divinatione* (*On divination*), written 44 BC, cf. Falconer 1923/1996, 214.

⁷⁸ E.g. concerning Chrysippus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν (in Latin sources=*in nostra potestate*). Yon 1933 translates *in nostra potestate* in Cicero's *De fato* 41 ff. as 'en notre pouvoir', yet states 1933, I that the issue at stake is how to save 'le libre-arbitre'. Cf. section 4.4. on Chrysippus.

of later thematical expositions where a doxographer, or a writer of the opposite view, sometimes mistakenly, has collected the views of different predecessors that from his own point of view dealt with the very same or with closely related issues. Sometimes, such an account may involve ascription of views to an earlier philosopher using distinctions and terminology that was entirely unknown to that actual philosopher.⁷⁹ Evidently, we should try to avoid repeating or reproducing this mistake, i.e. avoid translating different terms relating to different issues by one and the same modern term.

However, another explanation for the same tendency, as was also hinted above, indicates that a mistake similar to that of the ancient doxographers is still often found in interpretations of this terminology. This explanation consists of the fact that many interpreters tend to think that (i) there is a specific, clear-cut issue in contemporary philosophy depicted by notions such as ‘freedom’, ‘free will’, ‘freedom of the will’ or ‘freedom of choice’, and (ii) it must be the case that this same issue can also be found in the ancient sources, and thus (iii) there would be nothing wrong in paraphrasing different ancient greek philosophical notions by any of these modern ones. Instead such a paraphrase would enable us to see more clearly, to recognize, what the ancients are talking about. However, this way of paraphrasing the ancient notions is generally not only a simplification but moreover adds to the confusion about what issue is at stake in the ancient sources.

Another difficulty with the topic is that the notions of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν differ between texts and writers, and this occurs in at least two ways. One variation evidently has to do with which *things* or which *types* of things a specific writer counts as ἐφ’ ἡμῖν and which ones he excludes. This, however, is in a sense only the main philosophical issue that the notion deals with, i.e. some philosopher might be including a specific type of action as being ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, while not granting that another type of action should be included, and another might include only the activities of a specific capacity of the soul etc. Consequently, these differences are not only a problem with interpreting the notion as such but at the same time constitute a natural point of comparison between different writers; some will include some things in what is ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, others other things.

⁷⁹ An example might be the ascription of the notion τὸ ἀντεξούσιον to earlier stoics (Zeno and Chrysippus) by Hippolytus at *Haer.* 1.21.2.1 Marcovich, granted as a fragment by von Arnim, *SVF* 2.975, and then traditionally accepted, although questioned by Bobzien 1998a, 355, n. 74.

However, it is not only the case that different writers include or exclude different things in what is seen as ἐφ' ἡμῶν, but even the general conception of what *philosophical issue* the notion involves varies.⁸⁰ Thus, the conceptions of what issue the notion mainly involves is, as we will see, different in e.g. Aristotle and Epictetus.

The way these problems are approached in the present study is given by the overall aim of the study, of identifying, from the point of view of Plotinus, the different earlier notions of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in order to decide which one(s) Plotinus discusses, criticizes, or adopts himself, as well as the earlier conceptions of what issue the notion involves. Thus, the acknowledgment of differences between the philosophical schools or movements and of differences within these as well, in the Pre-Plotinian notions of ἐφ' ἡμῶν, in a way forms part of the methodological presuppositions of the present study.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Cf. Bobzien 1998a, 330–338, especially 332 for a discussion of differences within the Stoa, i.e. between the Early Stoic Chrysippus (c. 280–207 BC) and the later Stoic Epictetus (AD c. 55–c. 135). A related problem is the re-occurring idea that the notion depicts the same philosophical issue as the Stoic notion of ἐλευθερία (freedom) that in fact refers to quite a separate issue. For an analysis of this rather common conflation of the two issues, cf. Bobzien 1997; Bobzien 1998a, 330f. & Bobzien 1998b, 135. Bobzien 1998a, 331 argues that there is ‘no evidence that the Stoic concept of freedom and the question of that which depends on us were connected in any way before the Roman Stoa.’ Cf. also Frede, D. 2003, 205.

⁸¹ Sharples 1983, 9 describes the problem as follows: ‘The Greek *to eph' hēmin*, ‘what depends on us’, like the English ‘responsibility’, was used both by libertarians and by soft determinists, though they differed as to what it involved; thus the occurrence of the expression is not a safe guide to the type of position involved.’ This conception of the problem seems slightly too narrow, and simplistic. The problem is not that we are dealing with a straightforward debate about which things are ἐφ' ἡμῶν, and which ones are not, with people differing in what they take to be ἐφ' ἡμῶν. The problem is not only that the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν as such is understood differently by different authors, i.e. as to what is ἐφ' ἡμῶν, and what the conditions are for anything to be ἐφ' ἡμῶν, but the conception of what is at stake varies as well. However, not as to whether having a libertarian conception of responsibility or not, but rather, as we will see in e.g. chapter 4, many writers did not even take it to involve responsibility at all.

1.4. *Outline of the present study*

*Cette méthode un peu longue et parfois
fastidieuse, mais sûre et seule pleinement
efficace, nous est d'ailleurs imposée par l'état
actuel des études plotiniennes.*⁸²

As we saw above, the background of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Plotinus' *Enneads* consists of a long tradition of writings in ancient philosophy involving various aspects of the topic, where contributions were made by most philosophical schools and movements.

In chapter 2, then, I will first of all briefly outline the occurrences of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the *Enneads*, in order to identify the *prima facie* most significant features of Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and which make the subject particularly interesting and worthy of the kind of detailed investigation that this book constitutes. Then, I will give a general picture of the tendencies and problems in the previous research on the subject, in order to show the need not only for an investigation focused on this very subject, but more specifically the need for an investigation based on a detailed analysis of the notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the philosophical schools and movements contemporary to, and preceding Plotinus.

In chapter 3, I will begin the analysis of the background by discussing the origin of the philosophical discussion of the notion in Aristotle's *Ethics*. I then continue with the later Peripatetic commentators on the *EN* who contributed to the establishment of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as an intrinsic part of Aristotelian ethical terminology and doctrine. I discuss the peculiarities of the Aristotelian notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as well as the development—due to the debates with rival schools—within the early commentator tradition, regarding how the notion should be understood and applied. Namely, I analyze its development in Aspasius' *In EN*, the Anonymous commentator's *In EN II–V*, and in Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De fato*.

In chapter 4, I move on to the Stoic notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Notably, I analyze the sources ascribing a specific notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν to Chrysippus. I then move on to the Roman Stoa and the development of the notion in Seneca (i.e. *in nostra potestate*), in Musonius, Epictetus and Marcus

⁸² Henry 1931, 51, who rather stated this in favour of his method of simply going through Plotinian passages treatise by treatise.

Aurelius. I analyze the specific features in each author as well as the extent to which we find development from the Early Stoa to the Roman Stoa in the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν and the conception of what issues it involves.

In chapter 5, the so-called Middle Platonists are discussed. I analyze the notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the various sources that have been taken to represent Middle-Platonist views, and I investigate whether the so-called common or standard Middle-Platonist theory of fate corresponds to a standard Middle-Platonist notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and an account of how τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν fits together with fate.

In chapter 6, I return to Plotinus' *Enneads*. I thus analyze, in the light of the background discussion carried out in the preceding chapters (3–5), his notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. I thus focus both on his criticism of the previous notions as well as on the extent to which he assimilates elements of these. I begin with the occurrences of the notion outside VI.8., and then analyse different aspects of the investigation of the notion in VI.8.

In chapter 7, I finally draw some general conclusions about what Plotinus' contribution to the tradition of writings on τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν actually amounts to.

1.5. *Limitations of the present study*

The subject of this book may well appear too vast for one and the same study. Indeed, the development of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν within any one of the schools or tendencies which are studied below primarily *qua* the background to Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, would no doubt constitute proper subjects of study in their own right. Moreover, every single text mentioned in a study of the present character could as such be studied from innumerable interesting perspectives. The present study is, however, limited by its aim, which is analyzing the background of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as discussed in Plotinus' *Enneads*, and thus explaining the critical points Plotinus makes concerning different understandings of the notion, in the light of the preceding tradition. This aim naturally limits the investigation of the texts forming the background to Plotinus, in that these are analyzed strictly as to their notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The present study thus has no intention of being a comprehensive discussion of all the interesting aspects of the texts mentioned in the discussions of the background to Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

In addition, the scope of the study is rather sharply limited as regards the *Enneads*. Here as well, some readers might expect to find discussions of many aspects of Plotinus' philosophy that are actually absent in the present study.⁸³ Some might tend to think that the focus on this notion specifically is too narrow. However, as I said above, the effort of keeping this notion distinct, as far as is reasonable, from the related though different notions it is sometimes associated with or even blurred with, is an important step towards understanding each one of these notions as such, including the different ways of understanding them in different authors and philosophical schools. Particularly in the case of studying Plotinus, it is necessary if we want to identify variations in the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν within the *Enneads*, e.g. to be able to decide when he is speaking *in propria persona*, when he is simply quoting or paraphrasing others, or when there is actually development in his own understanding of the notion.

Moreover, the study has no aim of showing how some contemporary theory or notion, e.g. of 'free will' or the like, becomes complete with the work of Plotinus.⁸⁴ It rather simply aims at investigating how Plotinus develops his own notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν by way of studying the preceding notions of ἐφ' ἡμῶν available to him, and to then see in what ways he goes beyond them.

When I talk of 'background' in the present context, this might seem to imply an attempt to establish with certainty the direct influences on Plotinus of specific texts in the preceding tradition. However, this is not the way I will speak of background in what follows. Rather, establishing the preceding notions of ἐφ' ἡμῶν and analyzing similarities and differences between them simply aims at getting a clearer picture of to which notions of ἐφ' ἡμῶν and to which conceptions as to what issue the notion involves Plotinus could actually refer, and use as starting

⁸³ E.g. on the one hand, issues concerning Plotinus' ethics in general, which has been recently treated by Schniewind 2003. Cf. also McGroarty 2001; Smith 1999; Dillon 1996, and on the other hand, issues concerning theodicy, the problem of evil, the decent of the soul etc. which has been treated from various perspectives by e.g. O'Brien 1971, 1977, 1981 & 1993 with a focus on the Plotinian-Gnostic contrast; by Rist 1974b with a focus Plotinian-Augustinian contrast, and by Danielou 1974 with a focus on Plotinus' impact on Gregory of Nyssa.

⁸⁴ For a relevant example, analysing the development leading to the formation of the traditional notion of will in Augustine, cf. Sorabji 2000. Also, on the 'who discovered the will' theme, cf. Bobzien 1998b; Solignac 1994; Irwin 1992; Sedley, D. 1991; Mansfeld 1991; Kahn 1988; Dihle 1982, 1987; Madden 1982; Gauthier, R.A. 1954; Prado 1974; Gilbert 1963.

point of his own investigation. Moreover, the aim is to make it possible to discern the most distinguishing features of Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Whether some specific author is referred to or influenced Plotinus' notion in some specific place is thus taken as a separate issue, on which I will only comment in passing.

In the light of the historical-philosophical context of the issue of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν outlined above, I have chosen to quite strictly discuss material that actually uses or comments upon the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as such, and thus to limit the comments on the other—related yet clearly distinct— notions and related topics to a minimum. The reason for this, besides the fact that the issue of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in ancient philosophy is indeed a very interesting subject in its own right, is first of all that such a wider scope of investigation, bringing in more of the context, would make the study too vast. Secondly, the issues regarding τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν appears to be the ones most clearly to have acquired a topical status. Thirdly, the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is, I think, the one more well-known by people doing ancient philosophy today, although one not yet given sufficient systematical study. All these reasons motivate a study focused on this notion—and on it alone.

Another limitation concerns philosophers left out in the study. As for the background I do not bring in Epicurus or the Epicureans. This might seem odd, given that Epicurus is often mentioned in the secondary literature discussing the Hellenistic theories of fate and their consequences for the conception of 'free will'. However, Epicurus, as far as we know, did not use the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as such,⁸⁵ and he thus falls outside the scope of the study. Moreover, I do not discuss in any detail early Christian philosophers, e.g. Origen, Hippolytus etc. who indeed comment on the Pagan philosophical discussion of related issues, and might provide interesting points of comparison. The reason for this is, first of all, that this would include too many sources to be properly studied in a book of the present kind. Secondly, it appears to me to be fully possible to study the Pagan schools and tendencies on this subject, at least until Plotinus, without very much reference to positions defended by Christian philosophers of the same period, while the opposite may not be the case.

⁸⁵ Although he perhaps employed related expressions. Cf. Dobbin 1998 and Bobzien 2000.

CHAPTER TWO

PLOTINUS: PRELIMINARY REMARKS

As was stated in the Introduction above, this study uses a terminological and historical approach to Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. In order to show why such an approach is motivated and useful in this case, this chapter makes some preliminary observations as to the *prima facie* originality of Plotinus' discussion of the notion, and discusses some tendencies and problems in relevant previous scholarship. Thus, I begin with an outline of the occurrences of ἐφ' ἡμῖν and the related forms of ἐπί + *dativus personae* in the *Enneads*. I then continue with some remarks on three significant features of the discussion of the notion in *Ennead* VI.8. The aim is to indicate in what sense Plotinus in that treatise develops the notion—in several respects—in the light of the preceding philosophical tradition. Then, I make a brief survey of the major recent interpretations of the notion in Plotinus, and I draw some general conclusions as to the tendencies and problems with these interpretations. The chapter ends with a conclusion regarding what I take to be the main questions that the present study can hope to clarify, namely, which notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν were developed in the philosophical tradition before Plotinus, and how Plotinus' own notion can be analysed in the light of that tradition.

2.1. *An overview of the occurrences of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the Enneads*

Plotinus discusses the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in several places in the *Enneads*.¹ What I give in this section is simply a brief overview of these occurrences. The aim of this overview, is on the one hand, to make clear in which *contexts* it mostly figures in Plotinus, and on the other hand, to make some preliminary observations as to its *scope of application*, i.e. in relation to which things Plotinus discusses the notion. Exactly what

¹ Cf. Sleeman & Pollet 1980, 407, who in addition to the occurrences referred to in the present study, under the same heading, i.e. '*f) in dependence on, in the power of*,' also give some references to apparently quite different senses of ἐπί + dat., e.g. III.9.1.12; VI.2.22.19; VI.6.1.21.

this means will become clear as we move on. In going through the evidence, I will follow Porphyry's chronological order of the treatises of the *Enneads*. This is useful to give an idea of the extent to which Plotinus showed a continued interest in, and preoccupation with, the issues involved.

In the early *On fate* (III.1[3]), Plotinus argues against some conceptions of fate (ἐἰμαρμένῃ). Notably, he dismisses the Epicurean view that all things are caused by atoms (ch. 3); the Stoic or Stoicizing Platonist view that all things are caused by the world-soul (ch. 4); the Astrologers' view that all things are caused by the stars (ch. 5–6), and the Stoic view that all things are caused by the universal chain of causation (ch. 7). Plotinus then briefly states the Platonic view he himself endorses (ch. 8–10).²

In ch. 7, we find the singular substantivised form (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν) in the negative statement about the (Stoic) theory of the universal chain of causation. If the theory is true, Plotinus states, 'that which depends on us (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν) will only be a word'.³ This would then seem to be a more fixed technical notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and plausibly one assuming a commonsensical idea that while some things do not depend on us, something actually depends on every agent in equal manner, and the Stoic theory, it is argued, fails to make room for this idea. However, this being a plausible assumption, it is still not *prima facie* evident exactly what it refers to. The early Stoic theory Plotinus comments on would probably have it that τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν refers quite specifically to *assent*, *qua* act or capacity of the soul, but whether Plotinus here intends the same thing is neither made explicit nor evident from the context.

In ch. 9, within the exposition of Plotinus' own view, we find the notion in combination with the notion of voluntary (ἐκούσιος). Plotinus says that when the soul desires with its own pure and untroubled reason ruling it, only then, is the desire or impulse to be labeled 'depending on us and voluntary' (ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ ἐκούσιον).⁴ This statement signifies as it were a restriction of the applicability of the notion, in terms of satisfying a specific condition. What we learn here is that as regards desires, only some types are ἐφ' ἡμῖν, while other types of desires are not. On the one hand, the statement seems to imply an understanding

² Cf. Armstrong *ad loc.* *Introduction*, 6–7.

³ *Enn.* III.1.7.15: [...] ὄνομά τε μόνον τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἔσται [...].

⁴ *Enn.* III.1.9.10–11: [...] ταύτην μόνην τὴν ὀρεμὴν φατέον εἶναι ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ ἐκούσιον [...].

of the notion in which some things, e.g. desires satisfying the condition, are ἐφ' ἡμῖν, in the sense of depending equally on all of us, wise men as well as other types of agents. On the other hand, it is not clear that Plotinus would acknowledge that any other type of agents than the wise would actually be capable of such refined desires. An obvious question to raise in relation to this statement is moreover what Plotinus here takes to be the relation between the two notions voluntary (ἐκούσιος) and depending on us (ἐφ' ἡμῖν).

In ch. 10, Plotinus states that when wise men act it depends on them (ἐπ' αὐτοῖς) to do the noble actions.⁵ We thus have a case of Plotinus applying the notion in a way adapted to specific subjects, i.e. not in a formula-like way limited to speaking of what generally depends on us all, e.g. in terms of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν or τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The example, moreover, implies a notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν regarding which it is conceivable that (doing) things can very well depend on certain types of agents, e.g. the wise, while not depending on other types of agents, e.g. the rest of mankind.

In *On numbers* (VI.6[34]) it is said that the generation (of number) is not in the power of the numberer (ἐπὶ τῷ ἀριθμοῦντι), but is already limited and stands fast.⁶ Though this statement is limited to a specific type of agent, e.g. the numberer, it seems to imply that what is limited and stands fast cannot depend on any agent, and thus that there are a class of such things, including the generation of numbers, that are limited and stand fast, which are not ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The remark is, however, isolated and the point is not further developed by Plotinus.

While the notion occurs in several treatises, only VI.8[39] can be said to—in a sense—have it as its subject matter. At the very beginning of VI.8[39], in a sort of introductory paragraph listing various issues concerning the notion, the question is asked whether it is possible to enquire even about the gods if anything depends on them (ἐπ' αὐτοῖς),⁷ or whether it is rather the case that not just *something*, but *everything* depends on them (ἐπ' αὐτοῖς).⁸ On top of these two alternatives Plotinus adds the possibility that having everything depending on him (τὸ ἐπ'

⁵ *Enn.* III.1.10.11–12: [...] τοὺς γε σπουδαίους (τὰ καλὰ) πράττειν καὶ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς [τὰ καλὰ] πράττειν [...].

⁶ *Enn.* VI.6.2.8–9: [...] οὐκ ἐπὶ τῷ ἀριθμοῦντι τὸ γεννᾶν, ἀλλ' ἤδη ὥρισται καὶ ἔστηκεν [...].

⁷ *Enn.* VI.8.1.1–2: [...] Ἐὰρ ἔστι καὶ ἐπὶ θεῶν εἴ τί ἐστιν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ζητεῖν [...].

⁸ *Enn.* VI.8.1.4–5: [...] ἐπ' αὐτοῖς οὐ μόνον τι, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντα εἶναι; [...].

αὐτῷ) is rather to be attributed to the One than to the gods.⁹ Some lines down, the objective of the treatise is then straightforwardly stated as that of ultimately even enquiring in the same way about ‘him who is high above all things’ to see what ‘depending on him (τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ) means’.¹⁰ However, the first step is to enquire about ourselves, ‘whether anything happens to depend on us (ἐφ’ ἡμῖν)’.¹¹ The initial question then is what sort of thing one ought to say that ‘that which depends on us’ (τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν) is,¹² i.e. what the common notion of such a thing is. The notion then pervades the whole treatise, and it is roughly discussed first in relation to individual human souls (ch. 1–6), to Intellect (ch. 4–7) and then to the One (ch. 7–21).

In *On well-being* (I.4[46]), Plotinus dismisses some views on what well-being (εὐδαιμονία) is. Notably he brings up Aristotle’s view of successful performance of one’s proper function (ch. 1); the Epicurean focus on a particular sort of conscious experience (ch. 2), and the Stoic idea of the life of reason and primary natural needs (ch. 2). Then he gives an extensive exposition of his own views (ch. 3–16).

In ch. 7, he states that many people will act better when they become war-slaves. Plotinus points out that it depends on them (ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς) to depart when they are depressed.¹³ The context, i.e. the preceding paragraph makes it clear that by departing Plotinus means committing suicide, but it is not evident what point Plotinus is making here. The immediately following remark that ‘if they stay, either it is reasonable for them to stay and there is nothing terrible about it, or if they stay unreasonably, when they ought not to, it is their own fault’¹⁴ gives a slight hint. In addition to the case where they would depart, i.e. by suicide which one by definition causes oneself, two different cases in which they stay are discerned, and in both cases what they do can only be referred to themselves.

In the late *On providence I* (III.2[47]), the first part of a large treatise divided by Porphyry into two (III.2 and 3), Plotinus discusses various problems in relation to providence (πρόνοια). In ch. 10 he states that

⁹ *Enn.* VI.8.1.6–7: [...] τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ δὴ πάντα ἐνὶ ἐπιτρεπτόν, τοῖς δ’ ἄλλοις [...].

¹⁰ *Enn.* VI.8.1.9–10: [...] καὶ τοῦ ἄνω ὑπὲρ πάντα ζητεῖν τὸ τοιοῦτον, πῶς τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ [...].

¹¹ *Enn.* VI.8.1.15–16: [...] εἴ τι ἐφ’ ἡμῖν ὄν τυγχάνει [...].

¹² *Enn.* VI.8.1.16–17: [...] πρῶτον ζητητέον τί ποτε δεῖ τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν εἶναι τι λέγειν [...].

¹³ *Enn.* I.4.7.43: [...] ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς [...] ἀπελθεῖν [...].

¹⁴ Armstrong’s transl. *Enn.* I.4.7.44–45: [...] ἢ μένοντες ἢ εὐλόγως μένουσι καὶ οὐδὲν δεινόν, ἢ ἀλόγως μένοντες, δέον ἢ, αὐτοῖς αἴτιοι [...].

the motion of the cosmos is not such that nothing would depend on us (ἐφ' ἡμῖν).¹⁵ The background is evidently that there is a claim about the motion of the cosmos to the effect that it makes it impossible for anything at all to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν, i.e. given that all principles lie outside us. Plotinus thus adds that there is a sense in which humans are principles, too. The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν here appears to be general, in the sense that the issue is whether something depends on us (all) (ἐφ' ἡμῖν) *qua* human beings. The remark is made in relation to a discussion of causes or principles within a universal rational order, and of how to spell out the details of how human agency fits into the story.

As for the *contexts* in which we find the notion, then, it is evident that it occurs in treatises dealing with associated issues, which is moreover in some cases indicated by the Porphyrian titles of the treatises. In—Porphyrian—chronological order, we find it in *On fate* (III.1[3]); *On numbers* (VI.6[34]); *On the voluntary and the wish of the One* VI.8[39]; *On well-being* (I.4 [46]) and *On providence I* (III.2[47]). With the exception of *On numbers*, it seems safe to say that in the light of the Hellenistic debates about the compatibility of the Stoic doctrine of fate and a common notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, which made the philosophical discussion of the notion topical in philosophy in general, these Plotinian treatises could very well have mentioned the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in their titles.¹⁶ In fact, it has been suggested by Leroux (1990) that it would have been more natural for Porphyry to include it in the title of VI.8 than to give the title as we know it, and Leroux even suggests that Porphyry might have deliberately avoided to refer to the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the title to avoid associations to Hellenistic schools, in particular the Stoa.¹⁷

As to the *scope of application* of the notion, we saw that in the majority of cases the discussion regarded the types of human agents we are used to find in ancient philosophy of action, such as war-slaves, children, wild animals, bad men, and wise men, as well as aspects of the soul

¹⁵ *Emm.* III.2.10.12: [...] τὸ δὲ τῆς φορᾶς οὐχ ὥστε μηδὲν ἐφ' ἡμῖν εἶναι [...].

¹⁶ It might seem that *On well-being* should also be taken as an exception, but given that later Stoics such as Musonius and Epictetus (cf. chapter 4) had brought the themes of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν and what constitutes well-being together, a Plotinian treatise explicitly connecting these issues would come as no surprise.

¹⁷ Leroux 1990, 225 writes: 'En formant son titre, on aurait pu attendre de Porphyre qu'il reprenne le concept de "ce qui dépend de nous", véritable pivot du travail conceptuel de Plotin dans la première partie du traité. Mais peut-être, pour des raisons qui ont à voir avec la crainte d'un rapprochement trop grand des doctrines stoïciennes ou hellénistiques en général, a-t-il préféré le laisser de côté. C'eût été néanmoins le seul titre cohérent.'

as such, e.g. whether the desires of the soul depends on it (the soul) and so on. However, in this respect, *Ennead* VI.8, both in the light of the preceding tradition and within the *Enneads* as a whole, contains some features that strike one as rather peculiar, and it seems suitable that these are briefly pointed out in somewhat more detail.

2.2. *Three significant features of the account of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in Ennead VI.8*

From the point of view of the tradition of writings on τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν preceding Plotinus, briefly described in chapter 1 above, and which will be discussed in more detail in what follows, several features of Plotinus' perhaps most substantial discussion of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν, *Ennead* VI.8, will strike us as making it particularly worthy of discussion.

The first one is *the scope of the investigation*. The notion as discussed by Aristotle and the Aristotelian Commentators as well as in the Stoa, and in Middle Platonism was applied strictly to agents like humans and other animals. Plotinus' investigation concerns its application to the Intellect and to the One as well. This move not only indicates that Plotinus has a wider conception of what the issue involved really is, but moreover, that if Plotinus' discussion of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν is meant to cover its application to Intellect and the One, this wider scope will presumably also have significant consequences for the way he applies it to humans.

A second feature is *the criticism of the Aristotelian notion* as being too inclusive and inconsistent, a criticism that covers, or so I will argue, later versions of it among the Aristotelian commentators as well as Aristotle's own. Within the preceding tradition of writings on τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, we find explicit criticism of Stoic notions of ἐφ' ἡμῶν, both from Aristotelians and Middle Platonists. However, neither the Middle Platonists nor the Stoics seem to have explicitly criticized the Aristotelian notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν.

A third related feature is Plotinus' *restriction of the applicability of the notion* by a process of subsequently demanding stronger conditions for something depending—in the relevant sense—on someone. Plotinus thus develops the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν by a critical investigation of our common notions of what is *inner* or *outer* to something, of what is *proper* to it. This development of the notion was hinted at already in Aristotle, and re-occurs in Alexander of Aphrodisias. It is visible in Chrysippus, and became thematized in particular by the Roman Stoics Seneca

and Epictetus, in the analysis of the passions as externally determined. Plotinus, however, due to the first feature above, of refining the notion through investigating its application to higher levels than individual human agents, as we will see, goes much further in this direction.

2.3. *Previous scholarship on the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Plotinus*

It is safe to say that the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Plotinus is not generally taken to be a major issue, and perhaps not even taken to be a separate issue in its own right at all, in the previous literature commenting on it. This is then one explanation why there is little explicit debate and discussion about other interpreters' views in the literature. Rather, as a rule, people tend to simply stipulate their own readings of the notion without taking into account the fact that other people have different readings of it. Thus, while many views discussed below are not argued for as explicitly opposing any other view, it still appears suitable to speak of agreement where people have similar views, and of disagreement where they differ.

Previous interpretations of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Plotinus, then, show agreement on some points and disagreement on others. There is general agreement, even though this is never argued for, that it forms part of Plotinus' own terminology, i.e. that it is not merely a notion found in his comments on others' views. An issue related to the former, which has been generally disregarded in previous interpretations, is whether Plotinus always uses the notion in a congenial way or whether he sometimes refers to how it is used by his antagonists. Disagreement is found regarding the exact status of the notion in Plotinus. One issue involved here is the question which of Plotinus' predecessors his understanding of the notion mainly draws on. The following sections discuss the variations on this point in some detail. The main interpretations analyzed in what follows are Henry (1931); Harder, Beutler & Theiler (1967); Graeser (1972); Armstrong (1982); Leroux (1990); Crouzel (1991); Gerson (1994); Zierl (1995); and Leroux (1996). To underline some main tendencies in these interpretations, I have roughly divided them according to five kinds of interpretations, which I have called (1) *The Freedom Interpretation* (discussed in section 2.3.1.); (2) *The Free Choice Interpretation* (discussed in section 2.3.2.); (3) *The Free Will Interpretation* (discussed in section 2.3.3.); (4) *The Free Action Interpretation* (discussed in section 2.3.4.); and finally (5) *The Self-determination Interpretation* (discussed in sec-

tion 2.3.5.). The point of these divisions is that the divergences will thus become more clear, and hopefully it will also become clear as to what extent these divergences derive from overall assumptions that are not argued for by the different interpreters. Finally, I will draw some conclusions concerning the agreements and disagreements in the previous literature (in section 2.3.6.).

2.3.1. *The freedom interpretation*

Some interpreters tend to approach a range of ancient philosophical debates, those involving the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in particular, with the idea that they all dealt with one and the same issue, called 'freedom'.

Henry (1931) discusses what he calls 'freedom' (liberté) in Plotinus generally. He thus renders a number of different notions we find in Plotinus by 'freedom' (liberté), and its cognate 'free' (libre).¹⁸ He moreover explicitly claims that τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, αὐτεξούσιος, ἐκούσιον and ἐλεύθερος, are used by Plotinus merely as *interchangeable synonyms*.¹⁹ This, however, is never systematically argued for, but is rather a postulate.²⁰ The primary way Henry interprets the notion ἐφ' ἡμῶν is as 'freedom'. This is clearly manifested in his reading of *Ennead* III.1,²¹ as well as of *Ennead* VI.8, which in Henry's view is the only treatise 'consacré tout entier

¹⁸ Henry sometimes slides into what I discuss below as the Free Choice Interpretation, cf. section 2.3.2.

¹⁹ Henry 1931, 189 states: 'en dehors de cette discussion, qui n'est d'ailleurs pas trop claire, Plotin n'insistera plus sur la distinction entre ἐκούσιον et τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, mais prendra ces termes comme des synonymes interchangeables, auxquels s'ajoutent les adjectives ἐλεύθερος et αὐτεξούσιος, celui-ci particulièrement fréquent. Ces deux dernières expressions, dans la langue d'Aristote [sic!], ne s'appliquent pas à la liberté psychologique.' The remark is odd, since the notion αὐτεξούσιος is entirely absent from the Aristotelian *Corpus*. It is true, however, that the psychological employment of ἐλεύθερος is post-Aristotelian, i.e., Stoic. Especially in Epictetus the move from the political context is even visible, but it is the case in the fragments of the old stoa as well.

²⁰ Now, Henry 1931, 69, n. 1 also claims that Plotinus uses the term αὐτεξούσιος differently in different places, i.e. once in the sense of 'arbitrary', once in the according to Henry pejorative sense of 'independent', and everywhere else as an expression of the 'pure and simple freedom'. Should we then take Henry to hold that τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν as well is used in the three senses of i) arbitrary; ii) (pejoratively) independent, and (iii) as an expression of the 'pure and simple freedom', and the other notions as well? Moreover, he repeatedly refers to ἐκούσιος and its cognates as 'volontaire', 'volontairement' etc. and sometimes 'volonté', presumably thus not taking them to refer to some specific notion of 'freedom'.

²¹ Cf. Henry 1931, 55 ff.

au problème de la liberté'.²² Thus he in VI.8 interprets as 'a concept of freedom' the notion of τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ,²³ and reads the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as referring particularly to human freedom: 'en réalité Plotin se demande tout simplement si oui ou non l'homme est libre'.²⁴ What Henry's interpretation of the account of 'freedom' in especially VI.8 seems to amount to is the formula that freedom is 'the unhindered desire for The Good' (God).²⁵

One fundamental problem with this approach is that Henry is led to use the term 'freedom' for all discussions in the *Enneads* and before Plotinus involving any of the above mentioned Greek notions (as well as some discussions that do not). As a consequence, Aristotle's account of the voluntary (τὸ ἐκούσιον) and the involuntary (τὸ ἀκούσιον) in *EN* III and *EE* II is treated as if it dealt with the same issues as the Hellenistic debate of the compatibility of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν and the Stoic conception of fate. In addition, these issues are not properly distinguished from the issue of the nature of psychological freedom (ἐλευθερία), which only became topical with early Stoic philosophy, and was not discussed by Aristotle.

Another example of this line of interpretation is Armstrong (1982), who states that:

True freedom, true autonomy and independence, τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, is only attained when we are on the νοῦς level (as higher ψυχή, our higher self, always is even if we do not consciously choose to live on that level), when nature and activity and thought and will are one, when we are not enslaved to or struggling with passions or dependent on external circumstances to attain our purposes: when we are in, and all our activity is directed towards, the Good. This is true freedom, the unhindered activity of our true self at its best.²⁶

The statement quite well represents the tendency to interpret Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as a kind of freedom. Though Armstrong (1982) makes many interesting observations about mainly the early Christian and the late ancient Pagan conceptions of the issues related to

²² Cf. Henry 1931, 180ff.

²³ Cf. Henry 1931, 183ff.

²⁴ Cf. Henry 1931, 185ff.

²⁵ Henry 1931, 205: 'la liberté, c'est le désir non entravé du Bien'. This formula is evidently inspired by Arnou 1921.

²⁶ Cf. Armstrong 1982, 400–401. Armstrong elsewhere speaks more in terms of 'Free-will'. Cf. Armstrong 1999, 40; 122, n. 1.

the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, his tendency to mix it together with the discussions of freedom (ἐλευθερία, τὸ ἐλεύθερον) is unfortunate. As a consequence of this approach, the distinction between, on the one hand, the issue of the compatibilism of fate and providence with something being ἐφ' ἡμῖν, i.e. concerning the basis for our everyday practice of praise and blame, and on the other hand, the issue of ἐλευθερία as an attribute of the soul of the wise alone, entirely vanishes.²⁷

Leroux (1996) studies what he calls the notion of 'freedom' in Plotinus and moreover focuses primarily on 'human freedom'.²⁸ Thus, he does not primarily study the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as such, but still makes some remarks on how he understands it. It turns out however, that these remarks are rather imprecise, and it is difficult to see a straight line of interpretation. About Plotinus' objective in *Ennead* VI.8, he states that:

Plotinus is not merely interested in willingness as such, but in a concept of self-determination that will be able to guarantee that something will depend on us (*eph' hêmin*, VI.8.2.33–37) [...].²⁹

This would seem to hint at a focus on Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν and his conception of the underlying issue specifically, but Leroux actually

²⁷ Had Armstrong taken this distinction into consideration, he would probably have formulated his distinction between the 'two views of Freedom' differently, given that the difference between these separate issues somewhat corresponds to the differences he identifies between his two 'views' (as spelled out by Armstrong).

²⁸ Leroux 1996, 292 ff. He first talks of Plotinus' 'lexicon of freedom, mostly inherited from Aristotle and the Stoics (*ekousion*, *eph' hêmin*, *boulêsis*, *autexousion*),' (1996, 300) and of 'the conventional lexicon of free will' (1996, 302), which would seem to indicate an approach more sensitive to the nuances of these notions in Plotinus. Leroux, however, dismisses such an approach: 'we must abandon the attempt to find a doctrine of freedom in Plotinus' thought that is expressed in the conventional lexicon of free will, yet, on the other hand, we can find that doctrine in his rich and consistent reflection on the power and sovereignty of the soul' (1996, 302). On the other hand, he generally prefers to speak in terms of 'freedom' or 'liberty' or 'liberation', appearing interchangeably. Under these notions fall not only Plotinus' attack on some forms of determinism, but also his positive account of what it means that something depends on us, as well as the discussion of the descent of the soul into the body, and of what the goal of life is, and in the end, pretty much every aspect of Plotinus' philosophy. Obviously all these things and all topics in Plotinus are connected to various degrees, as they were in every ancient philosopher. This, however, does not automatically warrant Leroux's grouping them all together and inventing the theme of 'freedom'/'liberty'/'liberation'. For my own part, I think the very approach makes it rather difficult to see what his interpretation of the different topics amounts to.

²⁹ Leroux 1996, 308.

never follows up this track. Instead, he discusses the difference between Aristotle's and Plotinus' definitions of the voluntary (τὸ ἐκούσιον) and states that:

For Plotinus, the voluntary (*hekousion*) does not depend on criteria which defined the free (*eph' hēmin*) according to Aristotle. It must be given a thoroughgoing Platonic definition, essentially founded on the conscience of the moral good. That action is voluntary which seeks the good.³⁰

Leroux then seems to take Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, which he translates as that something 'depends on us', to be quite different than Aristotle's, which he translates as 'the free'. Moreover, these statements show that Leroux thinks that in Aristotle the notions of 'the voluntary' (τὸ ἐκούσιον) and 'depends on us' (ἐφ' ἡμῖν) were interrelated, so that the former does 'depend on criteria which defined' the latter, while in Plotinus the former 'does *not* depend on criteria which defined' the latter.

Probably the most precise statement on the notion in Leroux (1996) is the following one:

[H]uman beings possess an inalienable principle of freedom (III.3.4.6). Here more than anywhere else in his work resonates the force of the principle of that which depends on us (*to eph' hēmin*), the origin of the proper work of a human being.³¹

What Leroux is saying here is then (i) that 'the principle of that which depends on us' is 'the origin of the proper work of a human being'. This means that 'that which depends on us' is identified as 'the proper *work* of a human being'. Alternatively, the point is (ii) that 'that which depends on us' is identified as 'the *origin* of the proper work of a human being'. Either way one reads the statement, it is not very informative.

2.3.2. *The free choice interpretation*

In this section, I give some examples of what I call *The Free Choice Interpretation*. This is an interpretation that reads into Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, a notion of choice that is often without much clarification called 'free', and seldom referred to any specific Greek terminology of choice or decision. As a rule, then, it is seldom spelled out what such a notion of free choice implies. Rather, interpretations of this kind seem

³⁰ Leroux 1996, 308.

³¹ Leroux 1996, 310–311.

to start with an intuition that the overall issue discussed by Plotinus and his predecessors is one which by definition involves mention of some notion of free choice.

As we saw above, Henry (1931) generally opted for interpreting the notion in Plotinus as ‘a concept of freedom’, thus rendering the notion and its cognates as ‘free’. Generally this talk of ‘freedom’ seemed to more or less clearly refer to a state, i.e. as an attribute of a human being. However, one of the troubles with the analysis in Henry (1931) is that he is not quite consistent in this. As a matter of fact, he often slides into a quite different interpretation, which makes frequent reference to a notion of ‘libre arbitre’. Thus, he takes the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν outside VI.8 as referring to ‘notre libre arbitre’, which he spells out as ‘le libre choix de l’homme’.³² In fact, even within the interpretation of VI.8. he talks of τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν as ‘la mouvance de notre libre arbitre’, and spells out that what he means by this expression is that which depends on our ‘décisions volontaires’.³³

Another interpretation with a strong tendency in the same direction is Crouzel (1991). In a large comparative study of Plotinus and Origen, Crouzel discusses some of the passages of the *Enneads* where the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν is found. Discussing the aim of VI.8 he states:

[I]l pose le problème pour l’Un, mais d’éclare ensuite qu’il va commencer par chercher si l’homme a un libre arbitre (τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν) et quel concept (ἔννοια) correspond à cette expression.³⁴

Moreover, analysing the notion of ‘God’s will’, he states:

Mais Plotin laisse pour le moment cette question de côté et enquête sur le libre arbitre (ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, ἐπ’ αὐτῷ, αὐτεξούσιον) de l’homme. Le problème de la conciliation entre la volonté divine et le libre arbitre de l’homme se pose fortement à Plotin, comme il se posait aussi aux chrétiens de son temps et comme il se posera dans toute l’histoire du christianisme.³⁵

³² Cf. Henry 1931, 75 commenting on *Ennead* III.2. The expression ‘libre choix de l’homme’ here might loosely refer to the expression ‘τάδε ἢ τάδε ἐλέσθαι’ at III.1.1.28, but this is an evident over-interpretation. The tendency towards the free choice interpretation is observable already at page 73, where Henry renders the notion τὸ αὐτεξούσιον, which he as stated above sees as a synonym for ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, as ‘libre arbitre’ and even states that: ‘Jusqu’au grand traité VI.8 [...] Plotin ne paraît pas avoir professé en termes explicites, dans ses écrits, la liberté d’indifférence. Ici il le fait on ne peut plus clairement’.

³³ Cf. Henry 1931, 190f.

³⁴ Crouzel 1991, 304.

³⁵ Crouzel 1991, 98. Referring to *Enn.* VI.8.1.1. Crouzel 1991, 98, n. 2.

According to this reading, the key notions of *Ennead* VI.8, i.e. ἐφ' ἡμῖν, ἐπ' αὐτῷ, αὐτεξούσιον, would be synonyms. Moreover, they would all refer to man's free choice. Crouzel makes the same interpretation of the notion when it is used outside *Ennead* VI.8.³⁶ Moreover, discussing Origen's notion of 'free choice', Crouzel makes a more explicit statement of his view of Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν:

Remarquons d'abord que le libre arbitre qu'Origène exprime comme Plotin par τὸ αὐτεξούσιον ou par la locution τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ne semble jamais appelé du vocable paulinien d'ἐλευθερία et n'exprime qu'un aspect de la notion paulinienne correspondante, *le pouvoir de choisir* entre le bien et le mal, alors que la liberté paulinienne s'accroît par la vertu et l'union à Dieu jusqu'à coïncider d'une certaine façon avec la liberté de Dieu; au contraire la malice fait décroître la liberté et va jusqu'à la supprimer, faisant retomber l'homme sous l'esclavage des déterminismes animaux.³⁷ (my italics).

Though Crouzel throughout the book repeats his view of Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as a notion of free choice, he never, to my knowledge, gives an explicit argument for this view.³⁸ A somewhat similar yet slightly different interpretation is the one given in Harder, Beutler & Theiler (1967) that for Plotinus the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν relates to the general issue of the relation between the (weak) human capacity of free choice and divine omnipotence.³⁹

³⁶ That Crouzel adopts the same interpretation of the notion αὐτεξούσιος, i.e. as le libre arbitre, outside VI.8 as well is clear from his remarks on the descent of the soul as an error (ἁμαρτία) (1991, 303–304): 'De toute façon il est ici question [...] d'une chute du libre arbitre (ῥοπή αὐτεξουσίῳ)'; in his comment on V.1.1.1.5 (1991, 304): 'Dans leur éloignement de Dieu les âmes ont paru joyeuses de leur libre arbitre (αὐτεξουσίῳ)'; and when he comments on III.2.10.1 (1991, 483): 'L'homme va vers le bien par sa nature propre et le principe de son action c'est *le libre arbitre* (αὐτεξούσιον).'

³⁷ Crouzel 1991, 312.

³⁸ In general, cf. the chapter entitled 'Libre arbitre ou destin', Crouzel 1931, 299–314.

³⁹ Harder, Beutler & Theiler 1967, 360–361 comment on VI.8.1.1 ff.: 'Der mit ἐπ' αὐτῷ u.ä. gleichbedeutende Ausdruck αὐτεξούσιον (nach αὐτῷ ἔξεισι, vgl. Nik. Eth. 1014a20) ist seit Chrysipp belegt; αὐτεξούσιος=im Besitz der freien Verfügung, dem *liberum arbitrium* der Lateiner, stehend. Die ältere Eud. Eth. 1225a9 ff. betont, daß, wenn es von einem Menschen abhängt (ἐπ' αὐτῷ), ob er etwas gegebenenfalls Unwürdiges tut oder nicht, er freiwillig handelt; in diesem Sinne heißt es ὅσα πράττει ἃ μὴ βούλεται, ἐκὼν πράττει (was doch gegen sein inneres, auf das Gute gerichtete Wollen verstößt). Plotin hat sein Problem von der freien Verfügbarkeit aus aufgerollt und zwar im Bereich des Göttlichen; oder sollte die Untersuchung, ob etwas (τι) verfügbar ist, nur im Gebiet des prekären menschlichen Leistungsvermögens Sinn haben (denn, wie es auch Hierokles bei Photios Bibl. 465b7 bemerkt, das Leistungsvermögen der menschlichen Verfügungsgewalt ist ganz schwach (ἡ δύναμις τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου αὐτεξουσίου ἁδρανής

2.3.3. *The free will interpretation*

In some interpreters who comment on the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν we find what could suitably be called *The free will Interpretation*. This is an interpretation that generally renders a number of different notions in Plotinus, and in ancient philosophy as a whole, by the expression 'free will'. The tendency to gloss over several issues with the label 'free will' is of course also found in work not commenting particularly on the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.⁴⁰ Sometimes this implies that one is assuming that Plotinus *et alii* had a psychological theory where the idea of the will, as a separate faculty, the activities of which would be in some sense independent of other faculties and other factors generally, was fully established. Sometimes it is not that clear what they take 'free will' to refer to at all. It is simply used in a way that indicates that the author thinks that bringing it in is unproblematic and the reasons self-evident.

Gerson (1994) discusses Plotinus' views about what Gerson calls 'free will'.⁴¹ As a consequence of this approach, Gerson's account suffers from a lack of clarity, particularly due to the frequent mingling of translations of the notions actually used by Plotinus and Gerson's own terminology, including 'free will'. This makes it difficult to say what his expressions 'free will' and 'free action' or simply 'free' refer to, given that Gerson sometimes seems to take them as synonyms for points explicitly made by Plotinus himself, notably involving the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and sometimes uses them in some general sense of 'freedom' to which Plotinus is taken to subscribe. Gerson generally wants to

παντελῶς) während den Göttern Allvermögen zuzuweisen ist und ihnen alles zur Verfügung steht.' In fact, they seem to make ἐξουσίος, τὸ αὐτεξούσιον, and τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν synonyms.

⁴⁰ Rist 1967, 130–138 discusses Plotinus' view of 'Man's Free Will', and he oscillates somewhat between this expression and 'Freedom of the Will'. Instead of analyzing the notion of will, Rist spells out Plotinus' points in terms of 'choice' and 'decision', yet ends up downplaying the role of 'the power of choice', since freedom for Plotinus is 'Rather [...] freedom from that necessity of choice which the passions impose.' (1967, 137). Rist 1974a equally stresses the absence of analysis of choice in Plotinus. Atkinson 1983 talks generally in terms of Plotinus' view of 'Free-Will', as it appears primarily in relation to the terms αὐτεξούσιος and ἐξουσίος. Cf. Atkinson 1983, 5–6; 7; 9; 12; 58. He typically claims at 1983, 8, that VI.8 is 'P.'s study of the nature of free-will.' Zierl 1995, 186 states that 'Αὐτεξούσιος [...] Stoisch und neuplatonisch terminologisch für den freien Willen', but then slides into what I discuss below as The Free Action Interpretation, saying instead that in VI.8.20, it means 'Macht und Herrschaft (κυριότης) über das eigene Tun.'

⁴¹ Cf. Gerson 1994, 155f. & 162.

downplay the Stoic influences in Plotinus' account,⁴² and to underline the Aristotelian background (although he does not mention Alexander of Aphrodisias). He thus paraphrases the main lines of *Ennead* VI.8, pointing out the references to Aristotle's *EN*, and tries to spell out Plotinus' view in terms of Aristotle's. Along these lines he thus claims:

In fact, Plotinus wants to hold that an action is within our power only if it is voluntary in a particular way, that is, if it originates in a rational desire alone, that is, a desire for the true good (VI.8.3.28–31).⁴³

Somewhat further ahead, he states:

Plotinus actually claims that virtuous deeds are not within our power because they are compelled by circumstances (VI.8.5.11–13).

The apparent inconsistency of these two points, i.e. given that virtuous deeds can be, and typically are carried out in a desire for the true good, and would then be voluntary in the relevant 'particular way', and from Gerson's interpretation 'in our power', would have been easily resolved, it appears, had the emphasis been less exclusively on the Aristotelian references and more on the Stoics. As we will see further ahead, Plotinus actually does spell out what exactly about the virtuous deeds that depends on us, and the compatibilism he then employs, i.e. of external forces acting on the agent on the one hand, and the agent's determination of the morally relevant quality of the deed on the other, quite evidently shares elements with the early Stoic discussion of how assent can be ἐφ' ἡμῖν while in one sense always being dependent on the appearances to which one assent.⁴⁴

2.3.4. *The free action interpretation*

Some interpretations tend to link the notion specifically to action. Given the tradition before Plotinus, this is by no means farfetched. Aristotle, who introduced the notion in *EN* III, in fact applied it primarily to actions. From the Early Stoics and onwards, however, more focus is

⁴² Gerson 1994, 155 states concerning Plotinus' account of 'Free Will' that: 'curiously Plotinus does not seem to take much account of the Stoics in this matter'.

⁴³ Cf. Gerson 1994, 161.

⁴⁴ Gerson 1994, 159 in a somewhat obscure way appears to give some credit to the Stoic compatibilism, and to observe a similarity with Plotinus, but it is unclear whether he thinks that Plotinus intentionally draws on it as a source, or whether he simply mentions it as a point of comparison.

put on its application to acts of the soul, and this development continues during the Roman Imperial period.

Leroux (1990) in some places attempts to distinguish Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν (perhaps together with the notion τὸ ἐκούσιον) from his notion of αὐτεξούσιος.⁴⁵ The difference then, would in Leroux's view be that whereas τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν depicts a kind of 'autodetermination' (auto-détermination) in the sense of 'the power to act' ('le pouvoir d'agir'), αὐτεξούσιος refers to 'the inner freedom of being in accordance with the intellect', and always refers to a 'deeper interiority' and a 'higher freedom', and to 'an incorporeal principle, untouched by the bodily affections'.

A questionable feature of this interpretation is that Leroux here argues both that (i) Plotinus' notion of αὐτεξούσιος is an effort to go beyond the *EN* discussion of what is voluntary and ἐφ' ἡμῶν and (ii) that Plotinus' notion of αὐτεξούσιος in fact corresponds to the one found

⁴⁵ Commenting on VI.8.3.6 (ἀναμφισβήτητον τὸ αὐτεξούσιον), Leroux says (1990, 257): 'Nous avons traduit cette expression en général par « libre détermination », pour bien la contraster sur l'autodétermination de l'ἐφ' ἡμῶν. C'est le sens de la traduction de McKenna, « true freedom », c'est à dire non seulement le pouvoir d'agir mais encore la liberté intérieure de l'accord avec l'intellect. Il s'agit toujours d'un concept renvoyant à une intériorité plus profonde et correspondant à une liberté plus élevée. Bréhier qui traduit parfois par « puissance sur soi-même » lui donne une connotation éthique trop grande; la « selbstbestimmung » de Harder convient sans doute mieux à l'autodétermination. Comme on le voit ici, cette qualité de l'acte admet des degrés à proportion de la connaissance qui y préside; Plotin introduit le concept de façon qualifiée: une libre détermination encore hésitante. Nous trouvons chez lui plusieurs emplois de l'adjectif qualifiant le mouvement (III.2.4.37), l'inclination (IV.8.5.28), le principe (IV.2.10.19), mais aussi la substantivation d'un principe: I.4.8.9; IV.3.16.15; V.1.1 et même l'adverbe, VI.7.20.34. C'est un principe incorporel, qui n'est pas atteint par les affections du corps [...] La majorité des emplois de ce terme sont concentrés dans le traité VI.8 (3, 17; 5, 26; 6, 19; 7, 17; 7, 27; 7, 42; 7, 44; 8, 1-2; 8, 11; 15, 19; 20, 32; 20, 37). Contrairement à la remarque de Atkinson, dans son commentaire sur V.1.1.5-6, qui en fait un quasi-synonyme de ἐκούσιος, il faut plutôt voir dans la forte utilisation de ce terme une recherche pour trouver un concept différent de la psychologie du volontaire à l'oeuvre chez Aristote. Il s'agit d'un terme qui n'apparaît pas chez Aristote, et si Plotin lit le *De fato* d'Alexandre au moment où il entreprend la discussion VI.8, il est probable qu'il ait été sensible à l'utilisation qui en est faite là: Alexandre, en effet, fait de l'αὐτεξούσιον le coeur même de l'ἐφ' ἡμῶν, sa signification (*De fato*, 182,24); de plus Alexandre utilise fréquemment le terme ἐξουσία pour désigner la liberté comme puissance, par exemple en 181, 6. La signification donnée par Plotin est tout à fait parente: il s'agit d'une liberté de niveau supérieur, spirituelle d'essence. C'est d'ailleurs en ce sens que le terme qualifie le mouvement de l'âme en V.1.1.5-6.' The analysis carried out in chapter 6 will, I take it, make clear that there are in fact significant differences between Alexander and Plotinus on these matters.

in the Aristotelian commentator Alexander Aphrodisias, who, according to Leroux, makes the notion of ἀντεξούσιος ‘the very heart of τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, its meaning.’ Thus, Leroux’s interpretation wavers on the exact status of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν in relation to ἀντεξούσιος on the one hand, and to ἐκούσιος on the other.

2.3.5. *The self-determination interpretation*

Graeser (1972) focuses on the stoicizing elements in Plotinus account of what he calls ‘Man’s free will’. The emphasis lies on *Ennead* VI.8 with some references to parallels in III.1. His analysis basically relies on reading into Plotinus the Kantian distinction between ‘the empirical self’ and ‘the metaphysical self’,⁴⁶ and in the end he finds in Plotinus ‘a striking anticipation of the thought of Immanuel Kant’.⁴⁷ Graeser’s interesting approach unfortunately does not draw enough attention to the differences between the Early Stoa, e.g. Chrysippus, and the Roman Stoa, e.g. Epictetus. Thus, he makes no distinction between the early Stoic issue of reconciling a common notion of τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν with the Stoic theory of εἰμαρμένη (fate), and the the early and later Stoic issue of ἐλευθερία as an attribute describing the Stoic wise. The result of this is frequent and yet unclear references to things being ‘free’ and to notions of ‘liberty’.

As to Graeser’s interpretation of the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, it seems to point in two slightly different directions, as illustrated by the two quotes below. First of all, Graeser states about Plotinus’ account of τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν in VI.8 that:

It is, thus, in respect to the level of προᾶξις that Plotinus holds that one must not speak of man’s autonomy as though man were a really independent agent, that is to say, really ἐπ’ αὐτῷ and ἀντεξούσιον. There is an aspect of προᾶξις, however, to which the notion of ἀντεξούσιον applies. For example, “to fight *with courage*” or “to behave *bravely*” depends upon the agent himself. Thus, speaking of an action in terms of ἐκούσιον and ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, [for Aristotle they are related to each other as *species* and *genus*], Plotinus contends that man himself is not capable of originating a προᾶξις, for it takes war as an external, i.e. auxiliary cause to fight or not to fight. What actually is in man’s power in the sense that it depends entirely upon him *qua* subject of choice is the quality of his conduct [τὸ καλῶς].⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Cf. Graeser 1972, 112 ff.

⁴⁷ Cf. Graeser 1972, 124.

⁴⁸ Cf. Graeser 1972, 119.

This statement then, rightly, I take it, points out that the quality of our actions does depend on us, even though these actions as such may be originated by events which do not depend on us. Further ahead however, Graeser makes a statement pointing in a different direction:

Plotinus is apparently aware that he must avoid using terms the connotation of which entails what was essential to the Stoics' and Aristotle's understanding of liberty, i.e., "power of choice". The word *αὐτεξούσιος* corresponds, indeed, to the Plotinian understanding of *τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν*, which with respect to man's non-empirical self may well be rendered by self-determination.⁴⁹

The remark implies that Graeser takes there to be two different notions of *ἐφ' ἡμῖν* in Plotinus, namely one with respect to what he calls 'man's non-empirical self', which may be rendered by 'self-determination', and one with reference to 'man's empirical self', which may be rendered by 'what is in man's power in the sense that it depends entirely upon him *qua* subject of choice'.

Leroux (1990) discusses the notion of *ἐφ' ἡμῖν* in various contexts.⁵⁰ Regarding the title of VI.8, he states that:

En formant son titre, on aurait pu attendre de Porphyre qu'il reprenne le concept de 'ce qui dépend de nous', véritable pivot du travail conceptuel de Plotin dans la première partie du traité. Mais peut-être, pour des raisons qui ont à voir avec la crainte d'un rapprochement trop grand des doctrines stoïciennes ou hellénistiques en général, a-t-il préféré le laisser de côté. C'eût été néanmoins le seul titre cohérent.⁵¹

Leroux thus not only acknowledges that the notion of *ἐφ' ἡμῖν* is central to Plotinus' discussion in the first part of VI.8, but he moreover means that given that it best describes Plotinus' discussion in VI.8, it should have been in the title of the treatise. Further ahead, commenting on the expression *τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ* at VI.8.1.10, Leroux states that:

Cette expression complexe joue un rôle central dans l'ensemble du traité et il faut l'interpréter parallèlement à l'expression plus technique, *τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν*. Quand Plotin demande (I, I) si quelque chose dépend des dieux, il présuppose qu'une question sur la causalité est en même temps une question sur la puissance: être à partir d'un être, c'est, en quelque sorte se trouver '*au pouvoir de cet être*'. Littéralement, être '*à partir de*' signifie donc '*dépendre de*'. La préposition grecque condense à la fois

⁴⁹ Cf. Graeser 1972, 123.

⁵⁰ Cf. Leroux 1990, 224; 233; 237; 240; 248; 253; 276; 288.

⁵¹ Leroux 1990, 225.

l'origine, la causalité et la dépendance qui en résulte (1, 4). Quand cependant l'énoncé de la question se conceptualise dans un terme, τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ (1, 6), c'est la signification de la puissance qui se trouve renforcée. Ce terme peut certes être traduit par une périphrase lourde, 'le fait pour toutes choses d'être à partir de Lui', ce que nous avons fait par souci de transparence à la ligne 6. Dans l'emploi de la ligne 10, la traduction Harder se risque à renverser l'expression en une faculté: 'die freie Verfügung', la rapprochant donc de la terminologie de τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Cela est sans doute trop rapide; Bréhier et Armstrong préfèrent, en se raccrochant à πῶς, faire porter la question sur une signification: 'que doit-on entendre dans cette expression?', et telle semble bien être la démarche de Plotin. Sans aller jusqu'à un emploi de citation—que signifie l'expression 'τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ'?—, Plotin s'interroge sur l'application de cette expression à l'Un et aux êtres premiers. [...] La forme au singulier de l'expression n'indique pas que Plotin entend la réserver à l'Un, comme on s'y attendrait peut-être après la mention de la ligne 6. L'enchaînement de la ligne 9 (καὶ...καὶ) montre plutôt que Plotin veut porter la recherche aux dieux aussi bien qu'à l'Un; c'est pour chacun, comme le traduit bien Harder (bei Jenem) que la question du sens de la liberté doit-être posée: comment comprendre que quelque chose est en leur pouvoir, même si nous leur reconnaissons le fait de la toute puissance? C'est précisément de cette manière que pourra devenir éclairante une recherche sur le sens de 'ce qui dépend de nous'.⁵²

Thus, Leroux (i) sees the preposition ἐπί (i.e. with *dativus personae*) as expressing the origin, the causality and the resulting dependence but also thinks that (ii) the notion of τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ rather has the meaning of 'power'. Moreover, Leroux thinks that while the notion of τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ does not have the connotation of a 'faculty', this is the case with τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Finally, Leroux sees Plotinus as primarily interested in the possibility of applying the notion of τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ to the One and to the higher beings, and thus takes the analysis of the notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν on the level of human agency as preparatory, and as instrumental to this end.

Commenting on Plotinus' question 'Τί τοίνυν νοοῦντες τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν' (at VI.8.1.21–22), Leroux states that:

Il s'agit littéralement de 'ce qui dépend de nous', mais avec l'article, l'expression ne qualifie plus des actes ou des qualités, mais bien l'agent lui-même dont c'est une caractéristique. [...] Nous avons traduit littéralement à chaque fois que la syntaxe le rendait possible; autrement, nous avons traduit par 'autodétermination' de manière systématique

⁵² Leroux 1990, 233–234.

toutes les expressions formées avec la préposition ἐπί, un pronom et l'article neutre. Il nous a été impossible en effet de trouver quelque distinction que ce soit entre ces diverses expressions: le noeud de la signification est stoïcien, ce qu'indique bien d'ailleurs le contexte que donne Plotin à sa reprise ici. L'affranchissement des contraintes et des sorts, du destin: quelque chose dépend-il de nous? L'expression désigne donc la 'libertas a coactione', si on peut utiliser cette expression anachronique (ligne 15). Il ne fait pas de doute que Plotin utilise ici un concept technique, dont il interroge les diverses expressions: l'autodétermination est opposée à la Fortune, à la nécessité et à la violence des impulsions passionnelles (et donc de quelque manière à la nature). L'homme possède-t-il quelque consistance en face du destin? La question est stoïcienne. L'enclitique (1.15: τῷ) indique bien son caractère général. [...] Plotin a critiqué la notion stoïcienne de liberté en III, 1, mais la méthode est différente dans VI, 8; plus platonicienne d'inspiration, elle reproche aux stoïciens de n'avoir pas fait de place pour une liberté dont l'essence serait autre chose que la liberté de contrainte des circonstances extérieures et résiderait bien plutôt dans l'identification théorique avec l'Intellect. Dans cette foulée, il propose de distinguer le *plein gré*, qu'il identifie plus ou moins à la notion aristotélicienne de EN, III, et le 'libre', c'est à dire la liberté platonicienne du bien, seule susceptible de donner un contenu à l'expression τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν. Le concept aristotélicienne se détermine par l'absence de contrainte extérieure (I, 23), et par la connaissance (I, 33–34 et 39–41), mais Plotin se dépêche de préciser qu'il s'agit de la connaissance générale, connaissance morale des hauts principes et non seulement des circonstances (I, 40). Cela l'éloigne déjà d'Aristote; cf. EN, III, 3, 1111a23–24. Il s'efforce de distinguer (I, 34s.) ce concept de celui de l'autodétermination, mais plus loin dans le traité il les emploie comme synonymes: VI, 8, 5, 1–2; voir aussi III, 1, 9, 11–13. La définition qu'il propose de l'autodétermination utilise le concept de volonté: c'est ce que nous faisons l'ayant voulu (I, 29–30). Elle se rapproche de la définition stoïcienne; cf. SVF, II, 984 et 1007, laquelle est assez semblable à EN, III, 7, 1113b5–6.⁵³

Thus, in this passage Leroux argues that (i) the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν, i.e. without the article, describes *acts or qualities*, but the notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, i.e. with the article, describes the *agent* himself, which is supposed to be something quite different from 'describing acts or qualities'. Quite puzzlingly, Leroux adds that it (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν) is in fact *a characteristic of the agent*. Secondly, he argues that (ii) in Plotinus the

⁵³ Leroux 1990, 237–238. Leroux moreover adds a rather non-conclusive paragraph on what seems to be the question of whether 'the voluntary' is in some sense prior to 'that which depends on us'. For an analysis of the different notions of the voluntary in Plotinus, cf. O'Brien 1977.

notion is understood in the same way on all occasions, and that (iii) it can be rendered ‘autodétermination’. Presumably then, he claims that it means ‘autodétermination’ on all occasions. Moreover (iv) it is a technical notion. Finally, he claims that (v) Plotinus tries to distinguish τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν from τὸ ἐκούσιον in the actual passage, but later on uses them as synonyms. In addition, Leroux states that (vi) Plotinus here suggests a definition of τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν similar both to the Stoic definition (presumably Old Stoic definition given Leroux’s *SVF* references) and to Aristotle’s in *EN* III, 7.

Further ahead, Leroux, commenting on VI.8.6.6 (τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν καὶ τὸ ἐλεύθερον), states that:

En quel sens l’autodétermination et la liberté sont-elles ici apposées et conjointes? Il est clair que pour Plotin, aussi bien dans le chapitre 3 que dans la suite de ce chapitre, l’autodétermination est cela-même qui, dans son identification à la vertu de l’Intellect, est libre. Il ne saurait donc être question ici de chercher une nuance entre deux principes: l’autodétermination est libre et elle est libre dans sa fixation par la vertu de l’Intellect.⁵⁴

Thus Leroux here, instead of seeing two distinct notions discussed together, wants to read into the passage a statement of the view that τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν is ‘free’ (ἐλεύθερον).⁵⁵

Summarizing the interpretation in Leroux (1990) of the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, Leroux argues that Plotinus uses it as a technical notion. He sees the notion as depicting the main issue of the treatise VI.8. However, he sees Plotinus as primarily interested in the possibility of applying the notion of τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ to the One and to the higher beings. The analysis of the human level notion of τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν would then be preparatory, and instrumental to this end. Leroux in general sees the preposition ἐπί (i.e. with *dativus personae*) as expressing the origin, the causality and the resulting dependence. While he thinks that the notion of τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ has the meaning of ‘power’, he underlines that it does not have the connotation of a ‘faculty’. By contrast, Leroux argues that the notion of τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν has this connotation of a *faculty*. On the other hand, Leroux argues that without the article, the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν in Plotinus describes acts or qualities, but that with the article (τὸ), τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν describes *the agent himself*, i.e. it (τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν), is a characteristic of the

⁵⁴ Leroux 1990, 276.

⁵⁵ As will become clear in chapter 6, Plotinus never actually states that τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν is ‘free’ (ἐλεύθερον).

agent. In relation to this idea, Leroux argues that it can on all occasions be rendered ‘autodétermination’. He claims that although Plotinus on some occasions in VI.8 tries to distinguish τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν from τὸ ἐξούσιον, he later on uses them as synonyms. In addition, Leroux states that Plotinus suggests a definition of τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν similar both to the early Stoic and the Aristotelian ones.

2.4. Conclusions

In section 2.1. above, we saw that the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν and its variants were found in several treatises in the *Enneads*, ranging from the early *On fate* (III.1[3]), to *On numbers* (VI.6[34]) and *On the voluntary and the wish of the One* VI.8[39] to the late *On well-being* (I.4[46]) and *On providence I* (III.2[47]). Moreover, in section 2.2., three features of the notion as developed in VI.8 were briefly pointed out, all making it particularly interesting from the point of view of the tradition of writings on τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν preceding Plotinus. The first feature is *the scope of the investigation*, i.e. the fact that Plotinus’ investigation concerns its application to the Intellect and to the One as well as human agency. Secondly, *the criticism of the Aristotelian notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν* as being too inclusive and inconsistent is unique. Thirdly, *the restriction of the applicability of the notion*, by a process of subsequently demanding stronger criteria for something to be ἐπὶ someone, influenced by investigating its application to higher levels than individual human agents, appears to go much further than any previous author. All these features make us wonder about the tradition of writings on τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν preceding Plotinus. Wherein lies Plotinus’ originality on this issue?

As we saw in section 2.3., there is no consensus in the secondary literature as to what tradition or sources Plotinus primarily draws on in developing his notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν. Some emphasize the Stoic influences, others point specifically to Aristotle’s *EN* III; others still focus on Alexander of Aphrodisias, while yet another group finds faithfulness to a generally Platonic position. Moreover, much confusion and unclarity in the secondary literature on these matters derive from tendencies of reading Plotinus on some non-argued-for assumption that Plotinus and all of his predecessors were discussing one general problem while using entirely different terminology and in quite different contexts, rather than focusing on specific issues in specific contexts, often indicated by differences in terminology.

The present study thus aims at coming to terms with some of these problems, by analyzing the notions of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in the different schools within the tradition of writings on ἐφ' ἡμῶν preceding Plotinus. This will hopefully clarify not only the question of what sources Plotinus primarily draws on regarding these issues, but moreover will shed light on the many specific points Plotinus himself makes in discussing the notion and the previous uses of it. In the end, this approach will then provide a firmer ground for saying something more systematical on Plotinus' originality, i.e. concerning the ways in which he develops the notion as well as the conception of the issues it involved.

CHAPTER THREE

ARISTOTLE AND THE EARLY COMMENTATORS

It is widely agreed on that the key text to interpreting Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, *Ennead* VI.8, starts off from a criticism of the notion as understood by Aristotle in the first chapters of *EN* III.¹ However, though Plotinus certainly read that work in itself, the most substantial and sophisticated Aristotelian accounts of ἐφ' ἡμῖν accessible to Plotinus were not by Aristotle himself. Several commentaries on Aristotle's *Ethics*, and other non-commentary works defending its doctrines, had been written in the time between. In fact, the criticism from adherents of the rival schools of inconsistency and error in the Aristotelian corpus probably went on throughout the Hellenistic period and onwards. Countering the criticism, various commentators and defenders of Aristotle attempted to reconcile different Aristotelian texts and thus to harmonize accounts from different works in order to develop 'Aristotelian' accounts that not just saved the phenomena in question but moreover acquitted Aristotle of any charges put forth against him. These Aristotelian accounts sometimes covered fields of philosophy that Aristotle's own works had probably generated rather than actually covered.² This is particularly true for the development of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν among the Aristotelian commentators. Thus, in order to say anything specific about in what sense the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν criticized in *Ennead* VI.8 is Aristotelian, it seems necessary to first take a closer look not only at Aristotle's own notion as found in his *Ethics*, but at its later development in the relevant Aristotelian commentaries and works on related topics as well. The point of doing so is twofold: first of all, we need a clearer view of the Aristotelian notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν and also of whether any significant development took place within the Aristotelian tradition before Plotinus. The two main questions related to this aspect are, on the one

¹ Cf. Armstrong 1988, 228, n. 1; H-S¹ (Vol. 3, 271 ff.; *index fontium*, 440); H-S² (Vol. 3, 240 ff.; *index fontium*, 333); Bréhier 1954, 123; Harder-Beutler-Theiler 1967, B.IV.b, 360 f.

² On this aspect of the relation between Aristotle's own views and the views of his followers in general, cf. Sharples 1983, 3–14, Thillet 2003, 16–26 and Gottschalk 1987, 1170–1172, and *passim*. For Aristotle's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the light of Alexander's definitions of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, cf. Bobzien 1998b, 143–144 and *passim*.

hand, the conditions for something being ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and, on the other hand, the scope of application of the notion, e.g. in relation to what types of *agents* it is relevant to ask as to whether something depends on them, and with respect to what kinds of *things* it is relevant to ask whether they depend on someone, e.g. actions or internal states of an agent. Secondly, we need this sort of analysis in order to decide whether the conception of the issue depicted by the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν remained the same within the Aristotelian tradition or rather underwent some development. What I will refer to as the conception of what issue the notion depicts is more generally in what context the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is discussed, and what the specific author thinks is at stake in the discussion of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. A related bundle of questions that will be brought up include when the notion entered philosophical terminology and when the first attempts were made to give a philosophical definition of the notion.

In this chapter, I will analyse the development of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν within the Aristotelian tradition before Plotinus. First of all, I give an account of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Aristotle. The focus will lie on the *EN* and *EE*,³ and the few passages appearing in other works will mainly figure in the footnotes.⁴ I will then investigate later developments of the notion in the three earliest relevant Aristotelian 'commentaries' on the *EN*.⁵ Thus, I begin with Aspasius' *In Ethica*

³ All references to *EN* refer to Bywater 1894; those to *EE* refer to Walzer-Mingay 1991.

⁴ Many passages in the Aristotelian corpus might seem natural, or even necessary, to bring up in context to the issue of the present chapter. However, they will not be discussed here, for two reasons. First of all, the delimitation of the present study is given by what the author in question says in terms of and about the notion ἐφ' ἡμῖν, which means that all other passages, though dealing with (from some point of view) relevant issues, fall outside the scope of the study. Secondly, bringing in all the seemingly relevant passages where the notion ἐφ' ἡμῖν is not found in order to attain a higher level of detail and technicality in our analysis than we actually get in the *Ethics* is exactly the move the Aristotle commentators (and other schools as well) made. If we do so as well, I think that we blur the interpretation of what Aristotle does and does not say on this matter, and moreover diminish our chances of identifying the points of development on this matter within the Aristotelian tradition, some of which consist precisely in placing the notion in a new context.

⁵ These texts, with the exception of Aspasius' commentary, are here called 'commentaries' in a quite loose sense, i.e. the anonymous commentary on *EN* II–V would strictly be labelled 'a collection of various scholia', even though the extant text might be composed by one hand, cf. Mercken 1990, 420. Also, the *De fato* of Alexander really deals with a philosophical problem perhaps not even envisaged by Aristotle, and least of all in the *EN*, cf. Bobzien 1998b, *passim*. Still, it contains significant exegesis and

Nicomachea commentaria.⁶ I then continue with the Anonymous' *In Ethica Nicomachea II–V commentaria*.⁷ Finally, I analyse the development of the notion in Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De fato*.⁸ The chapter ends with a general conclusion regarding the Aristotelian notion(s) of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

3.1. Aristotle's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν

Aristotle seems to be the first philosopher to attempt to make systematic use of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in a philosophical context. We find it mainly in the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics* (*EN* & *EE*).⁹ The context of its introduction into philosophical discussion is then primarily ethical, and the ease with which Aristotle brings it in at least implies that using it in this context must have seemed natural to the audience.¹⁰

development of many points in Aristotle's *Ethics*. Alexander, Aspasius, and Adrastus are the three Aristotelian commentators mentioned explicitly by Porphyry as those whose texts were used as starting points for Plotinus' lectures. However, Porphyry here adds 'and others that were available'. Cf. Porphyry, *Vita* 14.12. We have no extant texts by Adrastus. Neither the *index fontium* in H-S¹ nor the one in H-S² indicates any references to Aspasius or the Anonymous commentator within the *Enneads*. For indications of references to Alexander of Aphrodisias, cf. H-S¹ (III, 436f.); H-S² (III, 326f.), and for VI.8 specifically, cf. H-S¹ (III, 272ff.); H-S², (III, 240f.).

⁶ All references to Aspasius' *In EN* refer to Heylbut 1889. Two parts of Aspasius' commentary on the *EN* survive, one on books I–IV, and one on the greater part of books VII–VIII. Cf. Mercken 1990, 409 and below.

⁷ All references to the Anonymous' *In EN II–V* refer to Heylbut 1892.

⁸ All references to Alexander's *De fato* refer to Bruns 1892. As in the case of the secondary literature on the *CAG* in general, most of the secondary literature relating to the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is focused entirely on Alexander of Aphrodisias, and especially on his *De fato*. Some exceptions are a few rather recent analyses carried out on Aspasius. Cf. Alberti & Sharples 1999, *passim*, and especially Alberti 1999, with the bibliography by Tausch-Pebody & Barnes 1999. The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Aspasius and the Anonymous commentator on *EN* II–V is briefly discussed by Bobzien 1998b.

⁹ The forms we find are basically the non-substantivised general 'ἐφ' ἡμῖν' and agent-specific 'ἐπ' αὐτῷ' (also in plural), and the substantivized general plural 'τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν'. The non-substantivized general 'ἐφ' ἡμῖν' is also found in the spurious *Magna Moralia*. The occurrences of the notion in *MM* in general repeats what we find in *EE* or *EN*, and will not be discussed in further detail. Cf. e.g. *MM* Susemihl: 1.9.7.3, 1.9.10.1–6, 1.11.3.7, 1.12.1.1, 1.17.8.2, 1.34.6.1, 1.34.8.4, 1.34.11.2, 2.8.5.3–7.

¹⁰ The question of in which non-philosophical contexts the notion might have figured, i.e. technical e.g. legal, or non-technical, and in what senses, is indeed an interesting issue, but transcends the scope of the present study. For an analysis of the legal background of *EN* III, cf. Lee 1937, Irwin 1980 and Sorabji 1980, 288–298. For extensive references to relevant aspects of Greek law in general, cf. Irwin 1980, 145, n. 4.

Aristotle gives a systematic account of voluntary action in order to justify our customary practice of praise and blame, including the position that virtue and vice are voluntary. In this account of voluntary action, actions being ἐφ' ἡμῶν comes in as a sort of condition for their being voluntary, and thus for their being subject to praise or blame.¹¹

3.1.1. *The inclusive and exclusive notions of ἐφ' ἡμῶν*

For our present purposes though, we are interested rather in what the conditions are for something being ἐφ' ἡμῶν. In *EN* III, Aristotle's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν, as well as its inherent problems, is most clearly expressed in the following passage:

now the actual deed in the cases in question is done voluntarily, for the origin of the movement of the parts of the body instrumental to the act lies in the agent; and when the origin of an action is in himself, it depends on himself to do it and not to. Such acts therefore are voluntary.¹²

The interesting thing for our present purposes here is the statement 'when the origin of an action is in himself, it depends on himself to do it and not to.' (ὥν δ' ἐν αὐτῷ ἡ ἀρχή, ἐπ' αὐτῷ καὶ τὸ πράττειν καὶ μὴ).¹³ The statement expresses a quite vague condition for an action

¹¹ I will not in this study go into the debate as to whether Aristotle's account of action should be labeled 'determinist' or not, but cf. Sorabji 1980, x & *passim* for an 'indeterminist' interpretation of Aristotle's account of action, and *contra*, Everson 1990, for a 'causal determinist' yet 'compatibilist' interpretation.

¹² *EN* 1110a.15–18: [...] πράττει δὲ ἐκὼν καὶ γὰρ ἡ ἀρχὴ τοῦ κινεῖν τὰ ὀργανικὰ μέρη ἐν ταῖς τοιαύταις πράξεσιν ἐν αὐτῷ ἐστίν· ὥν δ' ἐν αὐτῷ ἡ ἀρχή, ἐπ' αὐτῷ καὶ τὸ πράττειν καὶ μὴ. ἐκούσια δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα [...]. As stated above the question as to whether Aristotle's notion is close to ordinary Greek transcends the scope of the present study, but a good guess would be that (as in other cases) he sees himself as saving the relevant, and more or less commonly acknowledged, phenomena by spelling out the notions involved, and in doing so often gives a new technical sense to them.

¹³ Aristotle mentions the same condition a number of times: *EN* 1110a15–18: [...] ἡ ἀρχὴ τοῦ κινεῖν τὰ ὀργανικὰ μέρη ἐν ταῖς τοιαύταις πράξεσιν ἐν αὐτῷ ἐστίν· ὥν δ' ἐν αὐτῷ ἡ ἀρχή, ἐπ' αὐτῷ καὶ τὸ πράττειν καὶ μὴ [...] (quoted above); *EN* 1113b30–32: [...] καὶ γὰρ ἐπ' αὐτῷ τῷ ἀγνοεῖν κολάζουσιν [...] ἡ γὰρ ἀρχὴ ἐν αὐτῷ [...]; *EN* 1114a18–19: [...] ἐπ' αὐτῷ τὸ βάλειν [...] ἡ γὰρ ἀρχὴ ἐν αὐτῷ. [...]; also with the plural: *EN* 1113b20–21: [...] ὧν καὶ αἱ ἀρχαὶ ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ αὐτὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ ἐκούσια. [...]; One variant of this is that when something depends on someone, he *is* (instead of *has in him*) the origin of it, as in *EE* 1223a2–4: [...] ἐφ' αὐτοῖς ἐστὶ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις [...] ἀρχαὶ τῶν τοιούτων εἶσιν αὐτοὶ [...]; *EE* 1223a4–7: [...] ὅσων πράξεων ὁ ἀνθρωπὸς ἐστὶν ἀρχὴ καὶ κύριος, φανερόν ὅτι ἐνδέχεται καὶ γίνεσθαι καὶ μὴ, καὶ ὅτι ἐφ' αὐτῷ ταῦτ' ἐστὶ γίνεσθαι καὶ μὴ, ὧν γε κύριός ἐστι τοῦ εἶναι καὶ τοῦ μὴ εἶναι [...]; *Rhet.* 1359a37–39 also has the stronger

depending on an agent, i.e. for it depending on the agent to do and not to, namely that the origin ($\alpha\rho\chi\eta$) is in the agent. The condition is vague in that it is not spelled out as to what would really qualify as such an origin ($\alpha\rho\chi\eta$).¹⁴ In fact, with no further specifications as to what counts as the origin being (or not being) in the agent, it appears that even non-rational human actions, as well as actions of children and actions of the other animals could depend on the respective agents. For, if in some sense the origin of the action in these latter cases were ‘in the agents’, their actions would depend on them. Also, if the condition is not further specified, one might well ask if not all actions are $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\iota\nu$, since it would seem awkward to say that an action was an action at all if the origin was not in any sense in that agent.

The stance taken in the present study regarding this problem will be the one of suggesting a distinction between two ways of reading the notion of $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\iota\nu$, thus distinguishing what we could call an *inclusive* and an *exclusive* notion. However, since this distinction corresponds to a more general ambiguity in Aristotle’s notion of action ($\pi\rho\alpha\tilde{\alpha}\xi\iota\varsigma$) as such, it seems suitable to discuss this latter problem before moving on to discussing the notion of $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\iota\nu$.

3.1.2. *The inclusive and exclusive notions of action*

The passage discussed above thus reveals a vagueness in Aristotle’s notion of $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\iota\nu$, in that it is not obvious what would qualify as an *origin* ($\alpha\rho\chi\eta$). It might be argued that the context rules out several options, and that in the end there is no vagueness. However, this solution would be too hasty. In fact, the problem with spelling out Aristotle’s exact notion of $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\iota\nu$ is connected to a far more general problem in his account of action, namely that he employs both an *inclusive* and an *exclusive* notion of action in *EN* and *EE*. Since this

version found in the commentators: [...] $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota$ $\delta\omega\nu$ $\epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\nu$ $\tau\acute{o}$ $\beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$. $\tau\omicron\iota\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha$ δ' $\epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\nu$ $\delta\omega\alpha$ $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\varphi\upsilon\kappa\epsilon\nu$ $\alpha\nu\acute{\alpha}\gamma\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ $\eta\mu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$, $\kappa\alpha\iota$ $\acute{\omega}\nu$ η $\alpha\rho\chi\eta$ $\tau\eta\varsigma$ $\gamma\epsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma$ $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\iota\nu$ $\epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\nu$.

¹⁴ Alberti 1991, 115 interprets $\epsilon\pi'$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omega}$ $\kappa\alpha\iota$ $\tau\acute{o}$ $\pi\rho\acute{\alpha}\tau\tau\epsilon\iota\nu$ $\kappa\alpha\iota$ $\mu\eta$ in the light of the formula that ‘the agent has the principle in himself’ as meaning that the agent, while determined to choose x , is still able to move or not to move the limbs, and thus ‘do or not do’ x . Alberti refers to Donini 1989, 3–4 and Sorabji 1980, 233–238 as sources of this interpretation. However, there seems to be nothing in the passage itself that would support such an interpretation. Someone might perhaps argue that the account of *akratic* actions in *EN* implies such a view, but that seems to be another issue, and too indirect a proof.

matter is closely related to the problem with the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, it seems appropriate to discuss it in some detail here, as this will not only shed light on Aristotle's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as such, but more specifically make the case stronger for accepting that there is a genuine unclarity in Aristotle's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.¹⁵

The *inclusive* notion of action (προᾷξιν), is, I take it, elaborated in *EN* III, and is *inclusive* in that it allows for speaking of non-rational action. This inclusive notion is visible in Aristotle's discussions in both a weaker and a stronger sense. In a weaker sense, we find the inclusive notion when Aristotle acknowledges human voluntary actions not involving rational decision (προαίρεσις), but merely spirit or appetite.¹⁶ Even though the agent performing such an action must *in principle* or *by nature* be rational, not every action would have to involve the rational capacity of the agent. In the same weaker sense we find the *inclusive* notion further on in *EN* III, and most clearly in the mention of 'action according to reason', being but one subset of 'voluntary action'.¹⁷ In a stronger sense, we find the inclusive notion in Aristotle's ascription of action to both children and other animals while at the same time explicitly *denying* them reason. Aristotle states that that the view that action caused by spirit or appetite is involuntary, implies that 'none of the other animals will ever act voluntarily, nor will children',¹⁸ which is why he refutes that view.¹⁹ Thus, he allows not only for action by non-rational agents, but for voluntary action by non-rational agents as

¹⁵ Obviously, some sort of evolutionary perspective might be adopted to explain away the internal divergences within the Aristotelian *corpus*, on this point as well as on any. For the present purposes, however, we have no use for such hypotheses, but merely desire to state clearly what the divergences in the *Ethics* really are, in order to as it were establish the spectrum of possible later interpretations, to account for the direction of the development of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

¹⁶ Action *due to spirit* (τὰ διὰ θυμόν *EN* 1111a25; 1111a28; 1111b20; τὰ κατὰ θυμόν 1111a35; αἱ ἀπὸ θυμοῦ 1111b3), shared both by rational and non-rational animals (1111b13), is negatively characterized in relation to voluntary action *on decision*: '[A]ctions caused by spirit seem least of all to accord with decision (κατὰ προαίρεσιν εἶναι)' (1111b18). Action *due to appetite* (τὰ διὰ ἐπιθυμίαν 1111a25; 1111a28; 1111b20; τὰ κατ' ἐπιθυμίαν 1111a35; αἱ ἀπὸ ἐπιθυμίας 1111b3), is shared both by rational and non-rational animals (1111b13). It is negatively characterised in relation to voluntary action on decision: 'the incontinent person acts on appetite (ἐπιθυμῶν μὲν πράττει), not on decision (προαιρούμενος δ' οὐ), but the continent person does the reverse, by acting on decision, not on appetite' (1111b15).

¹⁷ *EN* 1111b7.

¹⁸ *EN* 1111a25–27.

¹⁹ *EN* 1111a25–1111b4.

well.²⁰ In the case of children one might still think of their actions as performed by *in principle* rational agents, or *potentially* rational agents. However, the actions of other animals are not even actions performed by *in principle* rational agents. Thus, there is no sense in which their actions can be rational. Still, their actions are, as regards this notion, actions.

However, Aristotle in *EN* VI and in *EE* elaborates an *exclusive* notion of action, according to which only that which also proceeds from a rational decision (προαίρεσις) is to be called an action. This notion is the one in play when Aristotle states that animals have no share in the capacity of action; when he states that among the animals, humans alone are origins of actions; and when he argues by referring to common opinion that we do not ascribe the capacity of action to animals or children but only to agents acting by calculative reason.²¹

The point of distinguishing these two notions of action (προᾶξις)²² is that it is only with the latter, *exclusive* notion that acting becomes an exclusively human capacity that presupposes not only the possession but also the actual employment of reason. Moreover, for our present purposes, it is quite clear that the ambiguity in Aristotle's account of action makes the status of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν uncertain as well. In

²⁰ Irwin 1999, 315 concludes that on this notion of action 'probably a *praxis* must be voluntary', which, I believe, is neither indicated by nor follows from the relevant texts. Rather, the whole discussion in *EN* III.1–2 seems to aim at distinguishing (i) voluntary, (ii) involuntary and (iii) Non-voluntary *actions*.

²¹ Decision is said to be the efficient but not the final cause of action at *EN* 1139a31: [...] προᾶξεως μὲν οὖν ἀρχὴ προαίρεσις ὅθεν ἡ κίνησις ἀλλ' οὐχ οὗ ἕνεκα [...]. Aristotle, assuming that action is action according to decision, thus excludes non-rational human action as well as non-human action, since children and the other animals lack reason. In order to prove that perception (αἴσθησις) is not an origin of action (ἀρχὴ προᾶξεως) Aristotle quotes the fact that animals (τὰ θηρία), although having the capacity of perception (αἴσθησις), do not share (the capacity of) action (προᾶξις) at *EN* 1139a20. The same point is made at *EE* 1222b18, where it is stated that of the animals, who are in a sense origins, man alone is in addition an origin of any actions: [...] ὁ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος καὶ προᾶξεῶν τινῶν ἐστὶν ἀρχὴ μόνον τῶν ζώων [...], a view that Aristotle backs up with common language usage: 'For we should not say that any of the others act' (τῶν γὰρ ἄλλων οὐθὲν εἵπομεν ἂν πράττειν, *EN* 1222b20). The same position is made explicit later on as well, at *EE* 1224a29, where the age when we ascribe reason to humans is said to be identical to when we ascribe action to them, and it is backed up with practically the same reference to common language usage: 'For we do not speak of a child as acting, any more than a wild animal, but only a person who has attained to acting by rational calculation.' (ἀλλὰ τὸν ἤδη διὰ λογισμὸν πράττοντα).

²² It is common to also distinguish a third notion of προᾶξις which Aristotle discusses in *Metaphysics* IX, 1048b22ff., but it does not seem immediately relevant to the present discussion, and will not be brought up here.

using the action's being ἐφ' ἡμῖν as a condition for voluntary action, where 'action' is taken in the inclusive sense, the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν appears not to be intrinsically linked to rationality, since if not all actions are rational actions, not all actions that are ἐφ' ἡμῖν will have to be by definition rational, either. And in these contexts, i.e. where the inclusive notion of action is found, Aristotle also acknowledges animals and children as performing not just actions, but even voluntary actions, which extends the notion of having something dependent on oneself to these as well. Thus, we have what could suitably be called an *inclusive* notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, one which does not in any sense link it to rational agency.²³ The exclusive notion of action, on the other hand, implies a stronger notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν; namely one that links it to rationality and the capacity of deliberation, since if all actions are rational actions, all actions that are ἐφ' ἡμῖν will by definition be rational actions as well. Thus, on this stronger notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, something can only depend on an agent if that agent is an *in principle* rational agent, i.e. has a rational capacity *and* moreover uses that rational capacity in the action in question.²⁴ Let us call this an *exclusive* notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, one which links it to rational agency.²⁵

3.1.3. *A tentative ontology of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν*

A fact that has not always been emphasised enough in contemporary interpretations of Aristotle's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is that in addition to

²³ For explicit examples of the inclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, cf. also *Phys.* VIII.iv. 255a8–11, where *to move* and *to stop moving* is ἐπὶ animals, in contrast to inanimate objects.

²⁴ Some modern interpreters of Aristotle do defend what is in the present study called the exclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Inwood 1985, 250ff., states that 'Aristotle regarded morally responsible actions as a subset of an adult's voluntary actions', although in a note (n. 2, 251, (probably misplaced from 250) & 327) he reveals that this interpretation is only backed up by *EE* II.8. Inwood does not explicitly state that the one subset of action—rational action—is identical to the other—responsible action—but this appears to be his intention.

²⁵ What I refer to as *the exclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν* here, might seem to match the 'complex theory' of responsibility elaborated in Irwin 1980. But Irwin does not give a systematic analysis of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as such. Irwin's 'complex theory' is not a theory about the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, nor about the notion of τὸ ἐξουσίον in Aristotle, but about Aristotle's views of responsibility, which Irwin thinks is the issue unsatisfactorily dealt with by Aristotle in terms of among others, the above two notions. Although interesting, I take it that Irwin's analysis in the end implies rather that responsibility is something different from what Aristotle discusses, in terms of the notions of τὸ ἐξουσίον and ἐφ' ἡμῖν. For a more positive account of *EN* III, focusing specifically on nuances in Aristotle's notion of τὸ ἐξουσίον, cf. Roberts 1989.

the passages referred to in the above account and their corresponding, almost classical, Aristotelian action examples and situations, Aristotle actually gives a more systematic account of *the things* that depend on us, τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, somewhat further ahead, in *EN* III. 2–3. First of all, he does so by situating τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν as one among several classes of things that happen. The division here is given by the classes having distinct kinds of causes. He moreover gives several different characterizations and examples of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν. In this context, Aristotle perhaps comes closest to giving something like a technical definition of the notion. Secondly, Aristotle gives a couple of clarifying examples to distinguish several interesting *senses* or *ways* in which one can say that something is ἐφ' ἡμῶν. He thereby in fact gives an analysis of the notion that is rather more subtle than the one in *EN* III.1. Taken together, these aspects provide interesting additions to our picture of Aristotle's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν.

Aristotle in *EN* III.3 distinguishes what *is*—and what *is not*—ἐφ' ἡμῶν. The context here is the question of which things are sound objects of deliberation (βούλευσις), and which are not. The account of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν here is indirect.²⁶ Still, Aristotle's statement that 'we deliberate about what depends on us'²⁷ shows that he takes what he says about the objects of deliberation to be valid for τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν as well, and we can thus safely take many of the descriptions of the objects of deliberation as characterizations of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν as well. We shall come back later to the issue of the exact relation between these two classes.

The account of objects of deliberation and thus of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν amounts to the fact that they are: (i) that which can be done;²⁸ (ii) what can be done by ourselves;²⁹ (iii) things that happen through us, yet not always in the same way;³⁰ (iv) things that happen for the most part, but are unclear as to how they will turn out, things undecided;³¹ and (v) the

²⁶ Naturally, then, we do not find anything like the straightforward lists of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν that we find in later authors like Epictetus, on which cf. section 4.4.

²⁷ *EN* 1112a30–31: [...] βουλευόμεθα δὲ περὶ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῶν [...], where I take καὶ πρακτῶν to be explicative of τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῶν.

²⁸ *EN* 1112a30–31: [...] βουλευόμεθα δὲ περὶ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῶν καὶ πρακτῶν [...].

²⁹ *EN* 1112a33–34: [...] τῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἕκαστοι βουλευόμενοι περὶ τῶν δι' αὐτῶν πρακτῶν [...]. Same point made at 1112b32: [...] ἡ δὲ βουλή περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν πρακτῶν [...].

³⁰ *EN* 1112b3: [...] ὅσα γίνεται δι' ἡμῶν, μὴ ὡσαύτως δ' αἰεὶ [...].

³¹ *EN* 1112b8–9: [...] τὸ βουλευέσθαι δὲ ἐν τοῖς ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ, ἀδήλοις δὲ πῶς ἀποβήσεται, καὶ ἐν οἷς ἀδιόριστον [...].

means to some end.³² Apart from these characterizations of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, Aristotle also presents numerous examples.³³

Correspondingly, the following things turn out to *not* be ἐφ' ἡμῖν: (i') impossible things;³⁴ (ii') eternal things, (i.e. eternally being in the same way);³⁵ (iii') things that change but always happen in the same way;³⁶ (iv') irregular occurrences;³⁷ and (v') the results of chance.³⁸

The above characterizations are also related to a corresponding list of causes, including (a) nature (φύσις); (b) necessity (ἀνάγκη); (c) chance (τύχη); and (d) intelligence and all that is by man (νοῦς καὶ πᾶν τὸ δι' ἀνθρώπου).³⁹ Aristotle's point with listing these causes seems to be to place the realm of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν within a somewhat larger, ontological picture, where the notion τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν depicts a distinct class of things of a certain kind.

Though the account of classes of causes and of their relation to τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν given here is not very clear or straightforward, it still indicates that there is a class of things rightly called τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, covering both what happens by intellect (νοῦς) as well as all other things happening through man (καὶ πᾶν τὸ δι' ἀνθρώπου). All of these qualify as things 'which can be done' (πρακτά). But, even more interesting is (iii), i.e. that they are things that happen through us, and *not always in the same way*,⁴⁰ and (iv), i.e. that they are things that happen *for the most part*, but remain unclear as to how they will turn out, and things undecided.⁴¹ Distinct from this class, there are things happening through chance (τὰ ἀπὸ τύχης), i.e. things of which τύχη is the cause (αἰτία). Distinct from

³² *EN* 1112b11–12: [...] βουλευόμεθα δ' οὐ περὶ τῶν τελῶν ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν πρὸς τὰ τέλη [...].

³³ For these examples, cf. *EN* 1112a33 ff.

³⁴ *EN* 1111b32–33: [...] τὰ ἀδύνατα ἢ τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν [...], using the two classes as mutually exclusive.

³⁵ *EN* 1111b32–33: [...] περὶ τὰ αἰδία καὶ τὰ ἀδύνατα ἢ τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν [...], using the three classes as mutually exclusive; 1112a21: [...] περὶ δὴ τῶν αἰδίων οὐδεὶς βουλεύεται [...].

³⁶ *EN* 1112a26, i.e. either by necessity (ἐξ ἀνάγκης) or (also) by nature (τὰ φύσει), or by some other cause (αἰτία).

³⁷ *EN* 1112a27: τὰ ἄλλοτε ἄλλως.

³⁸ *EN* 1112a29: τὰ ἀπὸ τύχης.

³⁹ *EN* 1112a31–33: [...] αἰτίαι γὰρ δοκοῦσιν εἶναι φύσις καὶ ἀνάγκη καὶ τύχη, ἔτι δὲ νοῦς καὶ πᾶν τὸ δι' ἀνθρώπου [...]. On these lists and their re-occurrences in 'updated' versions in later authors cf. Bobzien 1998b, 147, and n. 17.

⁴⁰ *EN* 1112b3: [...] ὅσα γίνεται δι' ἡμῶν, μὴ ὡσαύτως δ' αἰεὶ [...].

⁴¹ *EN* 1112b10–11: [...] τὸ βουλευέσθαι δὲ ἐν τοῖς ὥς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ, ἀδήλοις δὲ πῶς ἀποβήσεται, καὶ ἐν οἷς ἀδιόριστον [...].

these two classes there are things happening through nature (τὰ φύσει), i.e. things of which nature (φύσις) is the cause (αἰτία), including some of the things that change but always happen *in the same way*. Finally there are things happening through necessity (ἐξ ἀνάγκης), i.e. of which necessity (ἀνάγκη) is the cause (αἰτία), also including some things that change but always happen *in the same way*.

Though many things are left less than explicit here, such as where to place ‘impossible things’, ‘eternal things’ and ‘irregular occurrences’, the general picture is clear: Aristotle situates the things that qualify as τὰ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν within a larger account of different causes (αἰτίαι),⁴² or rather, within a larger account of different classes of different ontological status, with different causes (αἰτίαι).

Aristotle moreover discusses what seems to be a sub-class of τὰ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, or situation-dependent exceptions to the account of τὰ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, yet still occurring from causes of type (a). These are things that while being generally ἐφ’ ἡμῖν may in specific cases depend on some agent, while not depending on another agent. The point here is not that some things depend only on excellent people and not on inferior people in the same situation. These cases do not in any way refer to or take into account the particular characters of the agents. Whether something depends on one in these cases rather has to do with the specific roles we have in specific contexts. In the most restricted sense Aristotle talks about what does not depend on one agent (but still on another agent), in the sense of something ‘that cannot be done *by himself*, like that a particular actor or athlete may win’.⁴³ The question is not whether the spectator of the game, i.e. the non-actor or non-athlete, would be *capable* of winning, had he taken part in the game. The remark instead points to the fact that the spectator is not *that* actor or athlete, and so, *that* actor or athlete winning is but dependent on the actor or athlete himself. However, the act of winning still falls under the category of things ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, i.e. things ‘which can be done’.

Another related remark describing indirect actions points in a different direction. Aristotle says that: ‘what happens through our friends in a way happens through us, since the origin is in us’.⁴⁴ Still another

⁴² Aristotle does not, however, explicitly make τὰ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν one of the causes (αἰτίαι) alongside chance (τύχη) and nature (φύσις) and necessity (ἀνάγκη), a move we find in e.g. Plutarch, cf. section 5.4.

⁴³ *EN* 1111b23–24: [...] τὰ μηδαμῶς δι’ αὐτοῦ πραχθέντα ἄν [...].

⁴⁴ *EN* 1112b28: [...] ἢ γὰρ ἀρχὴ ἐν ἡμῖν [...].

remark applying the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν to, as it were, collective actions is the one that some things are up to some set of people, (while not up to another set of people): *Any particular set* of people deliberates about the actions that come about through *themselves*.⁴⁵

To return to the relation between the objects of deliberation and τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, what has been discussed above mostly has to do with what it is really sensible to deliberate about. This might seem to imply that Aristotle is here employing an *exclusive* notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, in which the notion only applies to an agent that has and uses reason. On the other hand, because the whole discussion is based on the idea that we (if we are not madmen) deliberate *about* what depends on us (ἐφ' ἡμῖν), this implies rather that Aristotle does take there to be a class of objects of deliberation and a class of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and that here he wants to make the point that the former falls entirely within the latter. This point obviously does not imply that the two classes are co-extensive, but rather that the class of things ἐφ' ἡμῖν is more extended than the class of the objects of deliberation. In fact, the characterization of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν as including what happens by intellect (νοῦς) *as well as* all things happening by man (καὶ πᾶν τὸ δι' ἀνθρώπου) indicates that Aristotle is employing an *inclusive* notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, on which what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν covers things done or accomplished by agents not employing rational deliberation. Thus, as to Aristotle's ontological account of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, though it is situated within an account of the objects of deliberation and choice which would seem to link the notion to rational agency, it reveals an inclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *EN* 1112a33–34: [...] τῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἕκαστοι βουλευόμενοι περὶ τῶν δι' αὐτῶν πρακτῶν [...]. In spite of the plurals ἕκαστοι and αὐτῶν, Aristotle presumably means that among some groups, e.g. the Athenians, no one (Athenian) deliberates about some things, e.g. the Spartan constitution, which only depends on another group, i.e. the Spartans, of which the Athenians are automatically non-members by being Athenians. I.e. he still speaks about the actions and deliberations of individuals, rather than of joint actions like 'a team winning a game', or of deliberation in the original political and public sense (a sense where the plurality of agents is a necessary condition). The point would be as valid for an Athenian even if he were the only Athenian.

⁴⁶ Analysing the coherence of Aristotle's account of causes here with other works of his falls outside the scope of the present study, but for an attempt to compare the account of causation in human action here with that in *De Interpretatione* 9 and *Physics* VIII, cf. Sorabji 1980, 227–242.

3.1.4. *The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν applied to internal states*

What we have discussed above has exclusively dealt with the application of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν to actions (πράξεις). However, Aristotle in some places applies it to internal states of the agent as well, i.e. mainly character states (ἔξεις), but also to individual affections (πάθη) and thoughts (διάνοιαι). Now, the question arises, as to whether there are differences in how he understands the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in describing *actions* on the one hand and *states* on the other. In what follows, I will take a closer look at some of the more significant cases in which states are described as being or as not being, ἐφ' ἡμῶν.

In *De Anima* III.3 Aristotle attempts a definition of φαντασία. He subsequently distinguishes it from other capacities of the soul, and at one point states that it is obviously not the same kind of thinking (νόησις) as judgment (ὑπόληψις). The argument for this statement mentions the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν:

[T]his affection [sc. φαντασία] depends on us, whenever we want to (for it is possible to make something appear before one's eyes, just like those doing mnemotechnics arrange and form images), but to form an opinion does not depend on us. For it is necessary to either hold a false opinion or to hold a true opinion.⁴⁷

This is not the place to go into the details of Aristotle's account of φαντασία.⁴⁸ The sense in which φαντασία is ἐφ' ἡμῶν is not entirely clear. Aristotle could be pointing to the fact that imagining something to be in a certain way is an activity only restricted by our own capacity, while in forming opinions we are restricted, given that opinions are about things that actually are such and such, to either form a false or a true opinion about these things. For our present purposes, the relevant point in the passage is simply that Aristotle applies the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν beyond the realm of individual external actions, i.e. to a kind of affection (πάθος) namely an individual instance of φαντασία. Moreover, an interesting aspect is that the context of the passage sees φαντασία as not presupposing any rationality in the agent. This implies that the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν as applied to states in the passage is used in an *inclusive* way.

⁴⁷ *DA* 427b17–21 Ross 1956: [...] τοῦτο μὲν γὰρ τὸ πάθος ἐφ' ἡμῶν ἐστίν, ὅταν βουλόμεθα (πρὸ ὁμμάτων γὰρ ἔστι τι ποιήσασθαι, ὥσπερ οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημονικοῖς τιθέμενοι καὶ εἰδωλοποιοῦντες), δοξάζειν δ' οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῶν· ἀνάγκη γὰρ ἢ ψεῦδεσθαι ἢ ἀληθεύειν. [...].

⁴⁸ Aristotle's account of φαντασία as a whole presents numerous problems, cf. Frede, D. 1992 for an overview, and for a discussion of some key issues, cf. Sihvola 1996.

In *EE* II.8 we encounter a somewhat similar application of the notion.⁴⁹ Here it is applied to internal states, and most interestingly to thoughts:

Nor indeed (sc. do we say that what people do) through appetite (sc. depend on them). Therefore some *thoughts* and *affections* do not depend on us, nor the *actions* that follow such *thoughts* and *reasonings*. (my emphasis).⁵⁰

The remark is interesting in many ways. Besides the surprising exclusion of things we do due to appetite from what depends on us, it moreover seems to indicate a priority of states over actions, in the sense that whether the actions in question are ἐφ' ἡμῶν depends on whether the thoughts and reasonings they follow from are ἐφ' ἡμῶν. From the perspective of what we find elsewhere in the *Ethics*, this view of an action's being ἐφ' ἡμῶν as connected to whether the state, in this case the thought or affection from which it followed, was ἐφ' ἡμῶν, is quite odd. It is not the case that the statement entirely abandons the condition that 'the origin was in the agent' as such. Rather, it in a way reflects what we have called the exclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν, in that it restricts what can qualify as an 'origin'. Still, in one aspect, Aristotle here goes beyond the exclusive notion as well, namely in that the restriction is not one which draws a line of distinction between rational agency and non-rational agency, i.e. one on which all rational agency would qualify as making something ἐφ' ἡμῶν. Instead, the above example even excludes some thoughts and reasonings (τάς τοιαύτας διανοίας καί λογισμούς). Thus, the above notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν with regard to the actions that follow from states, is exclusive in that it places restrictions as to what really qualifies as having the origin of the action in oneself. Yet the restrictive condition on what is ἐφ' ἡμῶν is not related to the rationality of the agent but instead demands that the state from which the action followed was as such ἐφ' ἡμῶν.

⁴⁹ The context in the *EE* account as to what is ἐφ' ἡμῶν can briefly be summarized by the conclusion at *EE* 1223a: [...] δῆλον τοίνυν ὅτι καί ἡ ἀρετή καί ἡ κακία τῶν ἐκουσίων ἂν εἴησαν [...], which is the reason for the subsequent attempts to actually define the voluntary (τὸ ἐκούσιον), where the notion ἐφ' ἡμῶν enters the discussion. Thus, it is in a sense no surprise that the notion ἐφ' ἡμῶν is soon applied to states, as well as actions. Still, character states such as virtue and vice are not the same thing as particular momentary states, i.e. such as affections (πάθη), to which the notion is applied in the rest of book II.

⁵⁰ *EE* 1225a30–32: [...] ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ δι' ἐπιθυμίαν· ὥστε καὶ διανοαί τινες καὶ πάθη οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῶν εἰσίν, ἢ πράξεις αἱ κατὰ τὰς τοιαύτας διανοίας καὶ λογισμούς [...].

In *EN* III, as is hinted already at the beginning of the book, the discussion of the voluntary as such is motivated by the need to make sense of the common practice in which voluntary actions are subject to praise and blame while involuntary actions are not, and in the long run to explain how virtue and vice are voluntary. In *EN* III.5 we get the first clear statement of the view that the states of virtue and vice are ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and *in the same way*, or to the same extent.⁵¹ Further ahead, the point is repeated, but it is added that *actions* (πράξεις) and *states* (ἕξεις) are voluntary in different ways:

But actions and states are not voluntary in the same way. For we are masters over actions from the beginning to the end, when we know the particulars, but with states (we are masters) over the beginning, while the contribution in the particular cases is not evident (to us), just like with sicknesses. But since it depended on us to make use (of our capacities) in such a way, or not in such a way, for this reason they are voluntary.⁵²

The passage might seem to imply a difference in how the notion applies to *actions* on the one hand and *states* on the other. However, with a closer look it becomes fairly clear that this is not what Aristotle is saying. Although the point in the last sentence of the passage is somewhat unclear, it is evident that Aristotle merely distinguishes the way in which actions and states of character are *voluntary*. The difference has to do with the fact that whereas in the case of actions we can know and be masters over *all* the particulars, and among them *the effect* of the action; regarding states we can be masters of the origin, but never know the contributive effect particular cases will have. The interesting thing to observe in the passage is thus that while actions are taken to be voluntary in a stronger sense than states, there is no such difference as to their being ἐφ' ἡμῖν. This becomes even more clear if we apply the condition for something being ἐφ' ἡμῖν, i.e. that the *origin* was in the agent. The difference between states and actions revealed in the passage specifically regarded the *effect*, or *outcome* (of multiple particular cases), while as for the origin, we are master of it equally, both for states

⁵¹ *EN* 1113b6–7: [...] ἐφ' ἡμῖν δὴ καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἡ κακία [...]. The statement is argued for in the immediately following lines 7–14. It is restated again and argued for from a slightly different angle at *EN* 1114b12–25.

⁵² *EN* 1114b30–1115a3: [...] οὐχ ὁμοίως δὲ αἱ πράξεις ἐκούσιοι εἰσι καὶ αἱ ἕξεις· τῶν μὲν γὰρ πράξεων ἀπ' ἀρχῆς μέχρι τοῦ τέλους κύριοι ἐσμεν, εἰδότες τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα, τῶν ἕξεων δὲ τῆς ἀρχῆς, καθ' ἕκαστα δὲ ἡ πρόσθεσις οὐ γνώριμος, ὥσπερ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρρωστιῶν· ἀλλ' ὅτι ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἦν οὕτως ἢ μὴ οὕτω χρήσασθαι, διὰ τοῦτο ἐκούσιοι. [...].

and for actions. Thus, the passage implies that there is no difference between actions and states regarding the sense in which they are ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

To conclude, then, Aristotle applies the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν equally not only to actions (πράξεις) but to internal states of the agent as well, i.e. mainly character states (ἔξεις), but also to individual affections (πάθη), thoughts (διάνοιαι), and reasonings (λογισμοί). Although he is not in general arguing for a difference in how the notion is to be understood in the case of states or actions, respectively, there is at least one clear indication that he considered the option of actions' being ἐφ' ἡμῖν as dependent on whether the states they followed from were ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

3.1.5. *Conclusions concerning Aristotle's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν*

The above account of Aristotle's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν should suffice to show that while the notion is central to his account of the preconditions of virtue mainly given in *EN* III, his notion is still unclear in a way which poses problems for its interpretation. The basic unclarity consists in that he employs both what we have called an *exclusive* notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, related to a notion of action on which all actions, including actions that are ἐφ' ἡμῖν, are rational actions; *and* what we have called an *inclusive* notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, related to a notion of action on which only some actions are rational while others are in various senses non-rational, and on which actions that are ἐφ' ἡμῖν are not by definition rational.

Moreover, Aristotle, in discussing deliberation gives a systematic account of the things that depend on us, τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. What this account adds to the picture is that Aristotle, on the one hand, seems to take τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν to depict an ontological class of things that are ἐφ' ἡμῖν for all and everyone in equal manner, while at the same time allowing for some of these things not being ἐφ' ἡμῖν on some occasions, due to the specific roles we might have. This rather sophisticated analysis, while possibly pointing in two different directions, shows that Aristotle, on the one hand, rather than starting afresh and introducing a made-up philosophical terminology, attempts to cover and make sense of ordinary language notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν; but that he, on the other hand, in attempting to do so adds an ontological basis that certainly was not part of or assumed in the ordinary language notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. These two features of Aristotle's account, taken together, in fact provide an interesting clue to his, as it appears somewhat wavering, application of

the notion. They moreover indicate that Aristotle's *Ethics* are, as it were, the foundation texts of what later became a specific philosophical topic, as shown by the numerous later writings on τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν and τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, rather than being focused on that topic as such. As will be apparent further on, the interactions with rival schools forced the commentators and defenders of the Aristotelian account to higher levels of technical detail than found in Aristotle, especially regarding the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν. To conclude, though Aristotle's account of ἐφ' ἡμῶν has unclarity as to its application and scope, the common issue is nevertheless quite straightforward, i.e. the issue is (i) which agents the notion applies to at all and (ii) which actions or states of the agents that depend on them. It is within these two parameters, as it were, that Aristotle discusses the notion and it is within these two parameters that the unclarity lies.

3.2. *The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in Aspasius' In EN*

Aspasius, writing in the first half of the 2nd century AD, produced commentaries on a number of Aristotle's works.⁵³ As to the commentary on *EN*, only some parts of it have survived.⁵⁴ The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν occurs rather frequently in the commentary.⁵⁵ Even though Aspasius in several ways might go beyond Aristotle's account of the voluntary,⁵⁶ on which he is commenting in the relevant passages, his notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν seems to be vague in the same respect as Aristotle's.⁵⁷ We will nevertheless have to take a closer look on what Aspasius is saying in order to make this evident.

⁵³ For an overview, cf. Moraux 1984, 226–293 and Gottschalk 1987, 1156–1158.

⁵⁴ Ed. Heylbut 1889. Two parts of Aspasius' commentary on the *Ethics* survive, one on books 1–4, and one on the greater part of books 7–8, cf. Mercken 1990, 409. It originally seems to have covered all ten books, Cf. Moraux 1984, 250ff. On Aspasius' *In EN* in general, cf. Mercken 1990; Moraux 1984, 249–293; The articles in Alberti & Sharples 1999 and specifically for his account of the Aristotelian notion of virtue and the passions, cf. Becchi 1994.

⁵⁵ The expression 'ἐφ' ἡμῶν' occurs 37 times: *In EN* 69.18; 72.2; 72.16; 72.16; 73.30; 73.34; 74.5; 75.6; 75.7; 76.11; 76.11; 76.12; 76.12; 76.13; 76.14; 76.15; 76.16; 76.16; 76.17; 76.17; 76.19; 76.19; 76.30; 77.6; 78.17; 78.17; 78.18; 78.19; 78.29; 78.30; 78.31; 81.11. In addition, other forms occur about 20 times.

⁵⁶ Cf. Alberti 1999, *passim*.

⁵⁷ Even though it might appear as if Aspasius on some occasions gives *definitions* of ἐφ' ἡμῶν, on closer examination these seem rather to be but characterizations that form part of an argument in favour of statements comparing the class of things ἐφ' ἡμῶν with some other class. That this eventually results in a characterisation of ἐφ' ἡμῶν as such is

In Aristotle, the main vagueness had to do with the expression that ‘when the origin of an action is in himself, it depends on himself to do it or not to’ (ὅν δ’ ἐν αὐτῷ ἡ ἀρχή, ἐπ’ αὐτῷ καὶ τὸ πρᾶττειν καὶ μὴ).⁵⁸ The vagueness had to do with the condition of something being ἐφ’ ἡμῖν here, and more precisely with the notion of origin (ἀρχή). It remained unclear as to what actually qualified as such an origin, i.e. whether Aristotle should be read as having what we called an inclusive or rather what we called an exclusive notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν.

First of all, one question is thus whether Aspasius takes a clear stance on this very interpretative matter and aligns himself with one or the other of these two readings. Secondly, the same question can be asked concerning Aspasius’ interpretation of the *EN* III.2–3 account of things ἐφ’ ἡμῖν and things not ἐφ’ ἡμῖν. As to the first question, Aspasius seems to mainly paraphrase and repeat Aristotle’s expressions, without really analyzing or taking a stance on the notion of origin (ἀρχή).⁵⁹ As to the second question, Aspasius, just like Aristotle, *associates* the class τὰ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν with (i) the objects of choice, (ii) the objects of deliberation, (iii) the things that can be done, and (iv) the things not eternal (i.e. not eternally fixed or in the same way). However, these associations are not straightforward identifications. In order to ascribe, say, an exclusive notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν to Aspasius here,⁶⁰ one would rather need such a straightforward identification of τὰ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν with the objects of choice and the objects of deliberation. Then it would be evident that Aspasius had restricted the application of the notion to rational agency alone. On the contrary, we find the same statements as in Aristotle, that choice and deliberation are *about*, or *concern* τὰ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν.⁶¹ These

natural, given that a characterization of the objects of choice as a way of characterising choice as such (προαίσεις), in terms of identifying them with objects that are ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, naturally leads one to wonder what it means that they are ἐφ’ ἡμῖν. Still, it seems wrong to say that the explanations of why these things are ἐφ’ ἡμῖν are definitions of the notion as such.

⁵⁸ *EN* 1110a17–18, cf. above.

⁵⁹ The class of things ἐφ’ ἡμῖν is said to be such things whose beginnings are internal to us. Cf. *In EN* 59.15–16: [...] τῶν μὲν γὰρ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν ἐν ἡμῖν εἰσι καὶ αἱ ἀρχαὶ [...]; a point repeated at 74.5–6: [...] τῶν δὲ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν ἐν ἡμῖν ἡ κινητικὴ ἀρχή. [...]; and at 76.30: [...] ὧν δὲ ἀρχαὶ ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ αὐτὰ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν [...].

⁶⁰ As has been done by Alberti 1999, cf. below.

⁶¹ The class of objects of προαίσεις falls within the class of τὰ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν and within the class of what can be done, τὰ πραχθέντα, at *In EN* 69.7–9: [...] προαίσεις μὲν οὐδεμία τῶν οὐκ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, προαιρούμεθα γὰρ τὰ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν ὄντα· βούλῃσι δὲ καὶ περὶ τὰ μηδαμῶς ἂν πραχθέντα [...]; again at 69.18–19: [...] ἡ προαίσεις δ’ ἐστὶ περὶ μόνων τῶν ἐφ’ ἡμῖν [...]; and implicitly at *In EN* 69.13–15: [...] Μετὰ ταῦτα δεικνύται ὅτι οὐδὲ δόξῃ

statements, instead of implying that all things ἐφ' ἡμῖν are objects of choice and deliberation, rather imply that all objects of (sound) choice and deliberation *fall within* the class of things ἐφ' ἡμῖν, thus leaving it an open question as to whether Aspasius allows for some sort of actions being ἐφ' ἡμῖν while not resulting from deliberation and choice. Now, in fact we have explicit statements indicating that the objects of choice and deliberation, i.e. things chosen and deliberated upon are really only *one subset* of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Commenting on Aristotle's puzzling definition of choice, Aspasius paraphrases as follows:

Now, if what is chosen is something among the things which depend on us that has been deliberated upon and is desired, choice would then be a deliberate desire for things which depend on us. (my transl.)⁶²

This statement clearly allows for the possibility of an agent having a non-deliberate desire for something ἐφ' ἡμῖν and acting on it. Thus it appears that Aspasius opts for an *inclusive* notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

However, it has been argued that there is a development in Aspasius' notion from the point of view of its use in Aristotle. According to Alberti (1999), Aspasius understands the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in a restricted way that resembles what we have above called the *exclusive* notion in Aristotle. Alberti (commenting on *In EN* 60.18–22) summarizes:

Del resto, l'espressione ἐπ' αὐτῷ ("in suo potere") è adoperata, nel passo citato, anche da Aspasio. Ed essa sta ad indicare che l'agente ha anche la possibilità di scegliere di fare il contrario di ciò che fa, il bene anziché il male, l'azione nobile anziché l'azione turpe. E altrove, come ad esempio a 74.10–15, Aspasio definisce "in nostro potere" le azioni risultanti da una deliberazione e da una scelta. L'uso dunque ch'egli fa di quest'espressione prelude chiaramente alla definizione di τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, come "ciò di

ταῦτόν ἐστι προαίρεσις. ἡ μὲν γὰρ δόξα περὶ πάντα ἐστὶ καὶ τὰ αἰδία καὶ τὰ ἀδύνατα, οὐ μόνον περὶ τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν [...]; and again at *In EN* 69.18–19: [...] ἡ προαίρεσις δ' ἐστὶ περὶ μόνων τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν, οὔτε δὲ περὶ τῶν αἰδίων οὔτε περὶ τῶν ἀδυνάτων. [...]; The class of objects of deliberation falls within the class of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, at *In EN* 72.1–2: [...] πάντες ἄνθρωποι βουλευόμεθα πρῶτον περὶ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν [...]; a point explained at *In EN* 72.15–16: [...] περὶ ὧν γὰρ βουλευόμεθα, ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ ποιῆσαι καὶ μὴ ποιῆσαι [...]; and repeated at *In EN* 73.30: [...] βουλευόμεθα δὲ περὶ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν [...]; at *In EN* 73.34: [...] περὶ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν βουλευόμεθα [...]; and in the explanation of Aristotle's definition of choice, at *In EN* 75.6–7: [...] Ἐπειδὴ οὖν ἐστὶ τὸ προαιρετὸν βουλευτὸν καὶ ὀρεκτὸν τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν ὄντων, καὶ ἡ προαίρεσις ἂν εἴη βουλευτικὴ ὁρεξις τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν. [...].

⁶² *In EN* 75.6–7: [...] Ἐπειδὴ οὖν ἐστὶ τὸ προαιρετὸν βουλευτὸν καὶ ὀρεκτὸν τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν ὄντων, καὶ ἡ προαίρεσις ἂν εἴη βουλευτικὴ ὁρεξις τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν. [...]. Aristotle's own formulation of the 'definition' at *EN* 1113a9–11 runs: [...] ὄντος δὲ τοῦ προαιρετοῦ βουλευτοῦ ὀρεκτοῦ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν, καὶ ἡ προαίρεσις ἂν εἴη βουλευτικὴ ὁρεξις τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν [...].

cui è in noi la possibilità di scegliere anche l'opposto", che Alessandro darà in *De fato*, XII, 181,5–6.⁶³

Alberti sees Aspasius' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as one indicating that the agent had the possibility *to choose to do the opposite of what he does*. Thus, Aspasius' notion would presuppose that the agent (i) has a capacity of choice, and (ii) that the capacity is used in relation to the action in question, and (iii) that the capacity of choice is such that the agent had the possibility regarding the specific action, to choose to do *the opposite* action as well.

Aspasius would then, on this interpretation, have opted for a more exclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, according to which it applies only to rational agents. Alberti sees this notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as pointing ahead towards the definition given in Alexander's *De fato*.

As we found out above, though, the ascription of an exclusive notion to Aspasius would demand reading what is merely an association of the things ἐφ' ἡμῖν and the objects of deliberation and choice to be an identification of these two classes. That move, however, as we have seen, lacks textual basis, and we should therefore conclude that there are no grounds for reading an exclusive notion into Aspasius text.

As a consequence, regarding the relation of Aspasius' notion to what we find in Alexander, it rather seems that Bobzien (1998b) is right in seeing a *difference* in the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Aspasius and the later one in Alexander, as stated in the following remark about Aspasius:⁶⁴

As in Aristotle, there is no philosophical account of that which depends on us. As in Aristotle, too, deliberate choice is not one of the things that depend on us, but is *of* the things that depend on us. The things that depend on us are actions and virtues and vices. And finally, it depends on us to do and not to do things, not to *choose and not to choose* things, as Alexander has it.⁶⁵

To conclude, then, although Aspasius' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is vague, the few indications in any specific direction points rather to an inclu-

⁶³ Alberti 1999, 113.

⁶⁴ Bobzien 1998b finds indications in the *In EN* of Aspasius's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν being one 'presupposing freedom from force or compulsion—just like Aristotle and the Stoics', but then states that although these formulations and others 'lend themselves in principle to an indeterminist concept of freedom to do otherwise as we found it in Alexander,' there are no signs that Aspasius 'took them that way', Bobzien 1998b, 145. She concludes that the notion of what depends on us in Aspasius 'seems wholly compatible with both causal determinism and causal indeterminism,' Bobzien 1998b, 146. For the definitions of these (in this context) perhaps anachronistic positions, cf. Bobzien 1998b, 133 ff.

⁶⁵ Bobzien 1998b, 146.

sive than an exclusive notion. However, while deviating from the later notion found in Alexander's *De fato*, the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Aspasius' *In EN*, both in being vague and in tending towards an inclusive reading of Aristotle, resembles what we encounter in what is probably an intermediate Aristotelian commentator, namely the Anonymous 2nd century commentator on *EN* books II–V, to whom we shall now turn.

3.3. *The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the Anonymous' In EN II–V*

The Anonymous' commentary on *EN* Books II–V,⁶⁶ was probably written during the last quarter of the 2nd century AD,⁶⁷ and would thus be slightly posterior to Aspasius' commentary and yet somewhat earlier than Alexander's *De fato*. The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν occurs even more frequently in the Anonymous' commentary than in Aspasius' commentary discussed above.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Edited by Heylbut 1892.

⁶⁷ I agree with Mercken 1990, 408 who dates the commentary to the last quarter of the 2nd century AD, (1990, 420) arguing thus: 'Atticus was active under Marcus Aurelius (AD 161–180) [...] the references to Lucian and Atticus place the time of the final composition of our 'commentary' definitely after Aspasius, the Peripatetic commentator of the first half of the second century.' Sharples 1983, 15, n. 91 thinks the commentary is 'probably' earlier than those of Alexander. Kenny 1978, 37, n. 3, suggested it may be by Adrastus of Aphrodisias. Although the final version is plausibly by one hand, the anonymous *scholia* may have had different origins, and thus can be given different datings, cf. Mercken 1990, 419–429. Bobzien 1998b, 145 is more vague, dating it to 'the second half of the 2nd century'. For the possibility of a later dating of the commentary, cf. Sharples 1990, xx. Already Gauthier & Jolif 1970, I.1, 101 stated that 'il n'est peut-être pas exclu qu'il appartienne encore à l'âge d'or des commentateurs, le VI^e siècle. Il ne trahit aucune influence chrétienne et possède une excellente connaissance de la littérature grecque. Ses notes précises et documentées sont souvent fort utiles.' However, if the commentary had been written after Alexander, it would presumably contain influences of his work, or even contain direct references to it, but we find no signs of influence from Alexander in it. Moreover, the similar notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Aspasius and the Anonymous, and their being different from the one in Alexander's *De fato*, is a strong reason to date the Anonymous' commentary before Alexander.

⁶⁸ The expression ἐφ' ἡμῖν occurs in the Anonymous' *In EN II–V* more than 50 times: 139.16; 144.34; 144.34; 149.26; 149.33; 150.2; 151.12; 152.8; 153.5n; 153.7; 153.8; 153.9; 154.18; 154.21; 154.21; 154.23; 154.26; 154.27; 154.28; 154.29; 154.30; 154.31; 156.1n; 156.3; 156.4; 156.5; 158.2; 158.8; 158.10; 158.14; 159.12; 159.16; 159.17; 159.26; 159.29; 159.33; 161.9; 172.10; 175.7; 175.20; 175.21; 236.26; 236.27; 236.29; 236.30; 236.31; 236.36; 237.19; 246.19; 246.20; 246.21; 246.22; 246.25; 246.27; 246.32; 246.35.

For our present purposes, the main questions are: does the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν differ from what we find in Aristotle? Does it deviate from Aspasius' commentary on the *EN* on this point? It has been argued that the answer in both cases is no, i.e. that there is no philosophical account of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the Anonymous' commentary, any more than in Aristotle, and that the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is the same as in Aspasius' commentary.⁶⁹ Though partly correct, this view is in need of some qualification. To attain a more qualified view, we will have to discuss some of the peculiarities, and perhaps novelties, of the commentary which are related to the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

Many features of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the commentary are simply paraphrases of Aristotle's own statements. Yet, the comparison with what Aristotle actually says at least points to some traits of development.

One general feature in the commentary is that the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν occurs not only in the comments on *EN* III.1, where Aristotle begins to use it,⁷⁰ but already in comments on *EN* II.8–9. This indicates that the commentator has as it were extrapolated from *EN* III, to employ the notion generally in defending and explaining other statements within the *EN*, thus taking it as general Aristotelian terminology.

More specifically, the things said to *be* ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the Anonymous' commentary are: (1) things happening through man and of which man is the origin;⁷¹ (2) the origin of things that depend on us;⁷² (3) to do what deliberation has selected;⁷³ (4) virtue and vice;⁷⁴ thus, (5) to be good or

⁶⁹ Bobzien 1998b, 145–146.

⁷⁰ Within the *EN*, we find the notion (in the forms ἐπ' αὐτῷ (with plural), ἐφ' ἡμῖν and ἐφ' αὐτῶ) within two longer passages, *EN* III. 1–5 and V.5–13, and occasionally in VI.12 and X.9.

⁷¹ In *EN* II–V 150.1–2: [...] ταῦτα δέ ἐστι τὰ δι' ἀνθρώπου γινόμενα καὶ ὧν ἄνθρωπος ἀρχή· διὸ καὶ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἐστιν. [...]. A similar point is subsequently made: 152.7–9: [...] ἡ γὰρ τῶν φίλων ἀρχὴ καὶ αἰτία τοῦ γενέσθαι ἐν ἡμῖν ἐστι, διότι ἡμῶν ἀξιωσάντων γίνεται, μὴ ἀξιωσάντων δὲ οὐ γίνεται, ἐπεὶ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἡ τούτων κίνησις. [...].

⁷² In *EN* II–V 235.14: [...] οὗ ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐπ' αὐτῷ [...]; 235.16–17: [...] ὁ γὰρ ἄν τις τῶν ἐπ' αὐτῷ ὄντων, τουτέστιν ὧν ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐπ' αὐτῷ [...]; 235.18: [...] τούτων τῶν ἐπ' αὐτῷ ὄντων, ἃ ἐστὶν ὧν ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐπ' αὐτῷ [...]; 235.36: [...] τῷ τὴν ἀρχὴν μὴ ἐπ' αὐτῷ εἶναι [...]; 236.5–6: [...] ὁ ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἦν καὶ οὗ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐπ' αὐτῷ εἶχε [...]; 236.8–10: [...] οὐ συμβέβηκε τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς κινήσεως ἐπ' αὐτῷ εἶναι καὶ ὁ ἔχει τοῦτο κινήσει αὐτὸς καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τὴν ἀρχὴν [...]; 236.35–36 [...] οὕτω ἐστὶν ἐκούσια, ὅτι μὴ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἐστὶν ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς ἐπ' αὐτὰ κινήσεως. [...].

⁷³ In *EN* II–V 151.12–13: [...] καὶ ὥς ἐφ' ἡμῖν ὄν τὸ προᾶξει τὸ ὑπὸ τῆς βουλῆς προοριθὲν [...].

⁷⁴ In *EN* II–V 154.30: [...] ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ κακία [...].

bad;⁷⁵ thus, (6) the activities of the virtues,⁷⁶ (which are identified as actions); (7) the ‘supportive’ character states or habits a virtuous person might acquire at a mature age, to preserve the virtuous states of a good upbringing;⁷⁷ and (8) universal ignorance (ἄγνοια) and also to *not* have this ignorance.⁷⁸ Most of the above points we find in Aristotle. The points where one might have doubts I believe are (2), (7) and (8), and these require a closer analysis.

First, then, the Anonymous’ statements of (2) occur in passages where he rephrases Aristotle’s expression that something is ἐφ’ ἡμῖν ‘when its origin (ἀρχή) is in us’, i.e. not *external to us*. The Anonymous picks up and uses this explanatory scheme, but moreover adds to it the expression that in these cases the origin (ἀρχή) *as such* is ἐφ’ ἡμῖν. The difference, then, would be that whereas Aristotle stops the explanation once he has located the origin (ἀρχή) in the agent, and thus applies the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν to the level of the agent,⁷⁹ as in ‘the action depended on the agent *x*, and not on the agent *y*, for the origin was in agent *x* and not in agent *y*’, the Anonymous goes further. The Anonymous in addition wants to explain what it means that the origin (ἀρχή) is in the agent, and does so by the idea that the origin (ἀρχή) as such depended on the agent. Now as we saw in the section on Aristotle’s application of the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν to states, Aristotle in at least one place⁸⁰ seemed to think that the condition for an action being ἐφ’ ἡμῖν would be not just that the state or affection from which the action followed was *in* us, but that the state or affection was also in itself ἐφ’ ἡμῖν. If e.g. an action *a* depended on an agent *x*, this would demand not just that the origin *o* of *a* was in *x*, but that *o* as well in some sense depended on *x*. Within the Aristotelian picture, it is not entirely clear what would be an example

⁷⁵ In *EN II-V* 154.18–19: [...] ‘Ὅτι ἐφ’ ἡμῖν τὸ ἀγαθοῖς εἶναι καὶ κακοῖς, δείκνυνσι προσσφώμενος τοῖς εἰρημένους περὶ τε τοῦ βουλευέσθαι καὶ περὶ προαιρέσεως [...].

⁷⁶ In *EN II-V* 154.22–23: [...] καὶ αἱ τῶν ἀρετῶν ἐνέργειαι ἐφ’ ἡμῖν [...].

⁷⁷ In *EN II-V* 139.16: [...] ὥστε καὶ τὰ ἔθνη ἐκούσιά τε καὶ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν [...].

⁷⁸ In *EN II-V* 144.32–145.1: [...] Τῇ γὰρ τῶν καθόλου ἀγνοίᾳ μοχθηροὶ γινόμεθα, ἀγνοοῦντες τίνα τὰ καλὰ καὶ αἰσχρὰ καθόλου ἐστί, καὶ ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακὰ, καὶ φευκτὰ καὶ αἰρετὰ, ὧν ἡ ἄγνοια ἐφ’ ἡμῖν. διὸ καὶ ψόγος ἐν τούτοις παρέπεται τῷ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν εἶναι τὸ μὴ ταῦτα ἀγνοεῖν. [...].

⁷⁹ Aristotle at one point seems to go further than saying that when we have the origin in ourselves, the action depends on us, in saying that we are masters (κύριοι) of the origin of the action, i.e. at *EN* 1114b.30–1115a.1: [...] οὐχ ὁμοίως δὲ αἱ πράξεις ἐκούσιόι εἰσι καὶ αἱ ἔξεις· τῶν μὲν γὰρ πράξεων ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς μέχρι τοῦ τέλους κύριοι ἐσμεν, εἰδότες τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστα, τῶν ἔξεων δὲ τῆς ἀρχῆς. [...]. This being an isolated instance, however, indicates that this probably means the same thing as the action being ἐφ’ ἡμῖν.

⁸⁰ Cf. *EE* 1225a30–32.

of such an origin *o* ‘depending on’ *x*. Perhaps if some state or affection, being an origin *o* of the action *a*, if it derived from *x*’s own deliberation, reflection etc, that state or affection, would count as an origin *o* that depended on *x*, in the sense that its own origin *o*’, namely *x*’s deliberation, was in *x*. Whatever the specific idea behind that Aristotelian passage might have been, a good guess would be that the Anonymous, in using a similar expression, draws on that passage in Aristotle.

The Anonymous never explicitly makes more of the expression ‘the origin depends on us’. Therefore, we must conclude that the expression, on the one hand, constitutes a development in the Aristotelian notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, in that the Anonymous has extrapolated from an isolated remark in the *EE*, in using the idea of the dependency of actions’ being ἐφ’ ἡμῖν on whether the states they follow from are or are not ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, to practically replace Aristotle’s standard condition ‘that the origin is in us’.⁸¹ On the other hand, the Anonymous never spells out what it actually means that the origin depends on us.

Secondly, the idea in (7) which forms part of a somewhat unorthodox explanation of the Aristotelian account of the voluntariness of virtue⁸² extends the application of the notion to, as it were, ‘supporting’ states or habits that one acquires in order to remain virtuous at a mature age. The argument runs as follows:

One must note that he believes that one also acquires habits by oneself. For on the one hand the upbringing from childhood depends on others. Yet it is also possible that those being of a mature age themselves acquire habits when they discover, that in their case the states according to the virtues cannot survive without such habits. Thus the habits as well are voluntary and depend on us. Moreover this training would be an independent habit in that it has also come to be from oneself. And if this

⁸¹ What we would need in order to interpret the expression that ‘the origin is in us’ in a more substantial way would, for instance, be an application of the notion to say decision or deliberation, implying a further, as it were, internalization of the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν from actions to deliberation about and choices of actions, but I have been unable to find evidence for such a move in the Anonymous’ commentary.

⁸² The argument is found in a longer comment (*In EN II–V* 139.12–26) carrying the heading Διὸ δεῖ τὸν στοχαζόμενον τοῦ μέσου. (= *EN* 1109a30), but our argument does not seem directly relevant to the idea of virtue as the art of aiming right, and could thus be misplaced here. However, it is still a comment relating to the issue in *EN* II, of virtue as a habit established by our actions. Perhaps the comment should rather be associated with the theme hinted at slightly earlier (by the ἔργον ἐστὶ σπουδαῖον εἶναι. *EN* 1109a24), of how difficult and complex a task it is to be and remain virtuous. For sources to this theme in Greek philosophy and literature, cf. Gauthier & Jolif 1970, II, 1, 164–165.

(is the case), the habituation from childhood is not altogether separate from the (training) that comes about independently and virtue (comes about) according to the voluntary and not by force.⁸³ (My transl., with explications added within parantheses).

The point made by our commentator in the passage is quite clear. He claims that Aristotle's view was that virtue is voluntary, since virtuous people at a mature age often have to or are at least able to remain virtuous by submitting themselves to a training, thus acquiring additional states of character sustaining and preserving the virtuous characters they have been brought up to have. The claim responds to the problem, given the Aristotelian view, that during our upbringing we acquire certain (virtuous) habits which do not depend on us but depend on others, which would seem to place virtue outside the voluntary. The argument thus establishes that virtue comes about according to the voluntary and not by force, by stating that whether some agent, having been brought up to have virtuous states, stays virtuous, and thus in the long run, *is* or *is not* virtuous, is something voluntary, and not determined by force.⁸⁴ Although Aristotle defends the view that virtue (and vice) are voluntary, the doctrine he used for backing up his defence is rather different from the one here.⁸⁵ As for the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, it is applied to (i) one's upbringing (i.e., it does *not* depend on us, but is ἐν ἄλλοις),⁸⁶ and (ii) the

⁸³ In *EN II-V* 139.13–19: [...] Σημειωτέον ὅτι δοκεῖ αὐτῷ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ τις ἐθίζεσθαι. ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐκ παίδων ἀγωγή ἐν ἄλλοις. ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἐν ἡλικίᾳ γινόμενους αὐτοὺς ἐθίζειν γνωρίσαντας, ὅτι μὴ δύνανται αὐτοῖς αἱ κατὰ τὰς ἀρετὰς ἔξεις χωρὶς τῶν τοιούτων ἐθῶν περιγίνεσθαι. ὥστε καὶ τὰ ἔθη ἐκούσιά τε καὶ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. καὶ εἴη ἂν τοῦτο ἡ ἀσκησις αὐτεξουσίον τι ἔθος ὃν καὶ ἐξ αὐτοῦ γινόμενον. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, οὐκ ἀποκέλευται ὁ ἐκ παίδων ἐθισθεὶς καλῶς τοῦ αὐτεξουσίως καὶ κατὰ τὸ ἐκούσιον τὴν ἀρετὴν ἀναλαμβάνειν ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀνάγκη. [...].

⁸⁴ The conclusion is, it appears, the one of Aristotle's *EN III*, that virtue and vice are voluntary, but the argument in favour of the position, and it seems to me, the whole idea of states acquired by training at an adult age, that reinforce and secure the virtuous states due to successful upbringing, is new. On Aristotle's own argument in favour of the voluntariness of virtue, cf. Donini 1989, 4–6; Alberti 1999, 107ff.

⁸⁵ Aristotle's argument seems to be entirely based on the idea that at some point in time, one's character was still soft enough to be able to be trained to virtue by one's own performance of virtuous actions, and that further ahead in life, an agent's virtue or vice of character can still be said to be voluntary with reference to that former period of character formability. Cf. previous footnote.

⁸⁶ As a point of comparison one might observe that as e.g. Trapp 1997, xx discussing Maximus of Tyre, points out, Plutarch, in the beginning of the *De Audiendo* 37c–f, 'explains [...] that the passage from childhood to adult autonomy was the passage from external control to that of one's own innate rationality'. However, that idea, together with many accounts (general or biographical), modelled onto Prodicus' myth, as described in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* 2.1.21–2.1.34, of Hercules at the crossroads

virtue-sustaining habits (ὥστε καὶ τὰ ἔθνη [...] ἐφ' ἡμῖν). Although the doctrine employed here by the Anonymous goes beyond Aristotle's view in sophistication and detail, and although the mere object (ii) to which the notion is here applied (the virtue-sustaining states of character) is absent in Aristotle, the use of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as such does not differ from how it is applied to the actions or character states in the *EN*.

In (8) we find an interesting step away from the Aristotelian notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The so-called 'universal' ignorance, or unawareness (ἄγνοια), i.e. of what things are fine and shameful, good and bad, choiceworthy and to be avoided, is said to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν.⁸⁷ In Aristotle, the *EN* III discussion focuses on particular ignorance,⁸⁸ i.e. of the particular features of the action, of which Aristotle even made a list. The reason is that this is the type of ignorance that is included in one of his two conditions for something being voluntary, the violation of either making an action involuntary. Actions involuntary as a result of this 'particular' sort of ignorance he describes as occurring δι' ἄγνοιαν. Aristotle's agenda here is to save two phenomena. While his account of actions occurring δι' ἄγνοιαν, as being due to ignorance of particulars of the action, saves the contemporary everyday moral (and plausibly legal) praxis of pardoning some bad actions with reference to their involuntariness, he also needs to save the praxis, and the intuition behind it, that it is justified to blame so-called bad people, and most important, this latter view must be saved by an account that is consistent with his account of involuntary ignorance. Aristotle's account of the so-called 'universal' ignorance serves these two purposes. From what Aristotle says about this ignorance, which does not make an action involuntary and is no basis for pardon, it is clear that such ignorance (i) concerns *the intention*,⁸⁹ consists

(used by Maximus of Tyre in *Or.* 14), never becomes as technical as the Anon. In *EN II-V*, or even deals with the issue of one's responsibility for one's adult character and actions.

⁸⁷ In *EN II-V* 144.32 – 145.1: [...] Τῇ γὰρ τῶν καθόλου ἀγνοία μοχθηροὶ γινόμεθα, ἀγνοοῦντες τίνα τὰ καλὰ καὶ αἰσχρὰ καθόλου ἐστί, καὶ ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακά, καὶ φευκτὰ καὶ αἰρετὰ, ὧν ἡ ἄγνοια ἐφ' ἡμῖν. διὸ καὶ ψόγος ἐν τούτοις παρέπεται τῷ ἐφ' ἡμῖν εἶναι τὸ μὴ ταῦτα ἀγνοεῖν. [...]

⁸⁸ Cf. the section on Aristotle above.

⁸⁹ *EN* 1110b31: [...] οὐ γὰρ ἡ ἐν τῇ προαιρέσει ἄγνοια αἰτία τοῦ ἀκουσίου ἀλλὰ τῆς μοχθηρίας [...]. The expression ἐν τῇ προαιρέσει has led many interpreters throughout history to associate the point made here with the *choice* of e.g. means etc. and thus with the minor premise of a practical syllogism. However, I agree with the looser interpretation, i.e. taking it rather in the sense of *intention*, *aim*, (of say killing), which makes more sense in the context. Cf. Gauthier & Jolif 1970, II, 1, 183.

in (ii) ignoring what one ought to do and what one ought to refrain from,⁹⁰ and in (iii) ignoring what is fitting,⁹¹ (iv) regards the universal rule of action.⁹² It is an error such that it makes people unrighteous and generally bad,⁹³ i.e. it does not make our actions qualify as involuntary, but instead makes us qualify as wicked.⁹⁴

To my knowledge, Aristotle never explicitly spells out that to have and not to have this universal ignorance depends on us,⁹⁵ which is what we find in the Anonymous' commentary on the passage. Still, the move of applying the notion as done by the Anonymous is in no way hard to understand, given that a critic might well want to know what legitimates blaming bad people if the ignorance that makes them bad does not depend on them.

Finally, a peculiar feature is moreover that the Anonymous frequently makes a combined use of the notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν and ἐκούσιος, by repeatedly pointing out that such and such things are both ἐκούσια and ἐφ' ἡμῖν, in a quite systematic way.⁹⁶ Taken to mean 'not just ἐκούσια but even ἐφ' ἡμῖν,' this would indicate that his notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is what we have called exclusive. However, he rather seems to apply this combined formula meaning such and such things are ἐκούσια, and thus ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Given that he never makes the move (as Alexander later did, on which see below) of pointing out that all things ἐφ' ἡμῖν are ἐκούσια,

⁹⁰ *EN* 1110b28: [...] ἀγνοεῖ μὲν οὖν πᾶς ὁ μοχθηρὸς ἃ δεῖ πράττειν καὶ ὧν ἀφεκτέον. [...].

⁹¹ *EN* 1110b30: [...] τὸ δ' ἀκούσιον βούλεται λέγεσθαι οὐκ εἴ τις ἀγνοεῖ τὰ συμφέροντα [...].

⁹² *EN* 1110b32–1111a1: [...] οὐδ' ἡ καθόλου (ψέγονται γὰρ διὰ γε ταύτην) ἀλλ' ἡ καθ' ἕκαστα, ἐν οἷς καὶ περὶ ἃ ἡ πράξις [...]. On Aristotle's distinction between particular and universal ignorance, cf. the comments of Gauthier & Jolif 1970, II, 1, 182 ff.

⁹³ *EN* 1110b29–30: [...] καὶ διὰ τὴν τοιαύτην ἁμαρτίαν ἄδικοι καὶ ὅλως κακοὶ γίνονται [...].

⁹⁴ *EN* 1110b31–32: [...] οὐ γὰρ ἡ ἐν τῇ προαιρέσει ἄγνοια αἰτία τοῦ ἀκούσιου ἀλλὰ τῆς μοχθηρίας [...].

⁹⁵ As we will see below, Plotinus in *Enn.* VI.8. appears to criticize Aristotle or the position as such, for *not* granting that this ignorance is voluntary, a move for which Plotinus is criticized by Gauthier & Jolif 1970, II, 1, 184.

⁹⁶ Implicitly when arguing that character states acquired by training at a grown-up age are *both* ἐκούσια *and* ἐφ' ἡμῖν, at e.g. *In EN II–V* 139.16: [...] ὥστε καὶ τὰ ἔθνη ἐκούσια τε καὶ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. [...]; the formula is used at 154.20–21: [...] προαιρεταὶ καὶ ἐκούσιοι καὶ ἐφ' ἡμῖν (βουλευταὶ γὰρ) [...]; at 154.27–28: [...] αἱ κατ' ἀρετὴν πράξεις εἶναι ἂν ἐκούσιοι καὶ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. [...]; again at 154.28: [...] ὧν δὲ αἱ ἐνέργειαι ἐκούσιοι καὶ ἐφ' ἡμῖν [...]; at 154.28–29: [...] τούτων καὶ αἱ ἔξεις αἱ γινόμεναι διὰ τῶν ἐνεργειῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ ἐκούσιοι [...]; at 159.11–12: [...] διὰ τούτων δείκνυσι τὸ τὰς πράξεις δι' ὧν γίνονται ἐφ' ἡμῖν τε καὶ ἐκούσιους εἶναι. [...]; at 159.17: [...] ἀλλ' αἱ μὲν πράξεις ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ ἐκούσιοι [...]; at 159.33: [...] τὸ τὰς ἀρετὰς ἐφ' ἡμῖν τε εἶναι καὶ ἐκούσιους [...].

but not all things ἐξούσια are ἐφ' ἡμῖν, the combined use of ἐξούσια and ἐφ' ἡμῖν here could also well imply an inclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. This combined use is thus not committing the Anonymous to any particular understanding of the notion.⁹⁷

Thus, to conclude, several aspects of the Anonymous' commentary, while constituting developments in the arguments for Aristotelian positions, do not show signs of development as to the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The only feature in the commentary that constitutes a significant development is that the author has extrapolated from an isolated remark in *EE* indicating the dependency of actions' being ἐφ' ἡμῖν on whether the states they follow from are or are not ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Thus, the Anonymous speaks in terms of the general condition that something depends on an agent if the origin as such, of that thing, depends on the agent, and has practically replaced Aristotle's standard condition, 'that the origin is in us', with this new condition. A problematic feature here is that in this way the issue of what the notion refers to is postponed. As a matter of fact, the explanation of what it means that something is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, i.e. that it means it has an origin which is ἐφ' ἡμῖν too, runs the risk of an infinite regress, in that applied to the origin, the condition points to yet another origin equally ἐφ' ἡμῖν and so on.

3.4. *The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Alexander of Aphrodisias*

Alexander of Aphrodisias seems to have written no commentary on the *EN* in the strict sense.⁹⁸ Yet his *De fato*, probably written sometime between 198 and 209 AD,⁹⁹ though basically dealing with a problem unknown to Aristotle,¹⁰⁰ contains many points of interesting interpretation and development of the central doctrines of the *EN*.¹⁰¹ In order to

⁹⁷ Thus, the combined use rather echoes Aristotle's combined use in *EN* 1113b.20–21: [...] ὅν καὶ αἱ ἀρχαὶ ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ αὐτὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ ἐξούσια.

⁹⁸ On Alexander's works, extant and lost, cf. Sharples 1987, 1182–1199.

⁹⁹ The main indication of the date of composition is the initial dedication of the *De fato* to Septimus Severus and Caracalla (*De fato*, 164.3). Cf. Sharples 1983, 15f. and Todd 1978, 1, n. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Not only is what Alexander describes as the Aristotelian account of fate absent in Aristotle, but more significantly, so is the so-called problem of determinism as well, which could be seen as resulting from the confrontation of the—in this sense—unproblematic theories of Peripatetics and Stoics, respectively. Cf. Bobzien 1998b, conclusion & *passim*.

¹⁰¹ For a brief outline of the argument of the *De fato*, cf. Sharples 1983, 33–37.

see what is new in Alexander's account, we shall take a closer look at Alexander's notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν as such.

In his *De fato*, he uses the notion extensively.¹⁰² Speaking in *propria persona*, Alexander defines the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν mainly in four ways: (1) what happens by an *assent* in accordance with reason and judgment;¹⁰³ as meaning that (2) the agent is the *master* (κύριος) over *doing* and *not doing* something;¹⁰⁴ as meaning that (3a) the agent has the *power* (ἐξουσία) over *doing* something *as well as its opposite*;¹⁰⁵ as meaning that (3b) the agent has a *power* (ἐξουσία) over *choosing and doing* some things as well as their opposites;¹⁰⁶ and as meaning that (3c) the agent has the *power* (ἐξουσία) over *choosing* what he chooses as well as its opposite.¹⁰⁷ Here, 'being the *master* (κύριος) of *x*' is explicitly explained as meaning 'having the *power* (ἐξουσία) over *x* happening and *x* not happening'.¹⁰⁸ Finally he says that τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν means (4) 'what is free and independent'.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰² The expression 'ἐφ' ἡμῖν' occurs 62 times in the *De fato*, which is his most detailed account of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. It is also found in Alexander's Aristotle commentaries *In Metaph.*; *In An. prior.*; *In Top.*, in his *De Anima* and the four spurious works usually referred to as the *Mantissa*, cf. Sharples 1983; *Quaestiones* (= *Ἀπορίαι καὶ λύσεις*), cf. Sharples 1992 & 1994; *Ἠθικά προβλήματα*, cf. Madigan 1987 & Sharples 1990; and *Problemata*. On all these works, cf. Sharples 2001.

¹⁰³ *De fato* 183.28–29: [...] ἐφ' ἡμῖν δὲ τὸ γινόμενον μετὰ τῆς κατὰ λόγον τε καὶ κρίσιν συγκαταθέσεως. [...]. Cf. *De fato* 184.11–12: [...] εἰ δὲ τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἐστὶ ἐν τῇ λογικῇ συγκαταθέσει, ἥτις διὰ τοῦ βουλευέσθαι γίνεται [...]; *De fato* 205.15–18: [...] ταῦτα γὰρ μόνῃ τῶν καθ' ὁρμὴν γινομένων τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἔχει, ὅσα κατὰ λογικὴν ὁρμὴν ἐνεργεῖται. λογικὴ δ' ἐστὶν ὁρμὴ ἣ ἐν τοῖς βουλευτικοῖς τε καὶ προαιρετικοῖς γινομένη, τουτέστιν ἡ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὅταν ἐπὶ τοῖς γίνηται. [...].

¹⁰⁴ For the sense of being *master* (κύριος) over doing and not doing something, cf. *De fato* 169.13–15: [...] ἐφ' ἡμῖν δὲ ταῦτα, ὧν καὶ τοῦ πραχθῆναι καὶ τοῦ μὴ πραχθῆναι ἡμεῖς εἶναι δοκοῦμεν κύριοι [...]; *De fato* 180.4–6: [...] τοῦτο γὰρ ἐφ' ἡμῖν [...] οὐ ἡμεῖς μὲν καὶ τοῦ πραχθῆναι καὶ τοῦ μὴ πραχθῆναι κύριοι [...].

¹⁰⁵ *De fato* 211.31–33: [...] ἐφ' ἡμῖν εἰσάγων παρὰ τὸ πεπιστευμένον τε καὶ προελημμένον, ὃ φαμεν εἶναι διὰ τὸ ἔχειν ἡμᾶς ἐξουσίαν τῶν ἐν τοῖς πραττομένοις ἀντικειμένων [...].

¹⁰⁶ *De fato* 181.12–181.14: [...] οὕτως δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ποιοῦσιν. ἀναιροῦντες γὰρ τὸ ἐξουσίαν ἔχειν τὸν ἀνθρώπον τῆς αἰρέσεώς τε καὶ πράξεως τῶν ἀντικειμένων λέγουσιν ἐφ' ἡμῖν εἶναι τὸ γινόμενον καὶ δι' ἡμῶν. [...]; *De fato* 189.10–11: [...] εἶναι τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν [...] καὶ κύριον τῆς τῶν ἀντικειμένων αἰρέσεώς τε καὶ πράξεως. [...].

¹⁰⁷ *De fato* 181.5–6: [...] ἀλλ' ὅτι μὲν τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἐπὶ τούτων κατηγορεῖται, ὧν ἐν ἡμῖν ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ ἐλέσθαι καὶ τὰ ἀντικείμενα. [...].

¹⁰⁸ *De fato* 185.12–14: [...] διὰ γὰρ τὴν τοιαύτην ἐξουσίαν ἐστὶ τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, ὅτι τῶν οὕτως γινομένων ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν κύριοι, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔξωθέν τις αἰτία. [...]; *De fato* 212.15–16: [...] τοῦτον γὰρ μόνον κύριός τις, ὧν καὶ τοῦ μὴ πράττειν αὐτὸς ἔχει τὴν ἐξουσίαν. [...].

¹⁰⁹ *De fato* 182.23–24: [...] οὐκ ὄνομα μόνον τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῖν [...] ἀλλὰ καὶ σημαίνονον ἐκείνο τὸ αὐτεξούσιον [...]; *De fato* 189.10–11: [...] εἶναι τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἐλεύθερόν τε καὶ αὐτεξούσιον καὶ κύριον τῆς τῶν ἀντικειμένων αἰρέσεώς τε καὶ πράξεως. [...].

The association above of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν with choice might lead one to think that we would also get an application of the notion to choice as such. However, what Alexander does in these passages is to give explanations of what he takes to be the common notion of what τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν is. The way in which he gives these explanations naturally varies within the *De fato* according to the specific argument he wants to refute. Thus, one of the ways in which he explains the common notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν is by saying that it means that the agent has the power of choosing x as well as the opposite of x . In fact, we should take Alexander to have the same notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν on all these occasions, i.e. in (1)–(4) above. Thus, Alexander never to my knowledge goes as far as saying that ‘choosing’ is ἐφ' ἡμῖν. This simply is not the way he uses the notion.

On the other hand we do find something in Alexander that clearly constitutes a development in the Aristotelian notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Unlike Aristotle, who is vague as to whether the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is to be understood in what we have called the inclusive or exclusive way, Alexander in fact explicitly opts for an *exclusive* notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.¹¹⁰ Moreover, it seems that it is *this move* that lies behind Alexander's perhaps innovative association of the notion with choice. His exclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is clear from the following passage:

But the voluntary and what depends on us are not indeed the same thing. For it is what comes about from an assent that is not enforced that is voluntary; but it is what comes about with an assent that is in accordance with reason and judgment that depends on us. And for this reason, if something depends on us it is also voluntary, but not everything that is voluntary depends on us. For the irrational living creatures too, which act in accordance with the impulse and assent in them, act voluntarily; but it is peculiar to man that something of the things that are brought about by him depends on him.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Though Alexander obviously assures us that he is simply presenting Aristotle's doctrine of fate (εἰμασμένη) and of that which depends on us (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν) (*De fato*, Ch. 1.16–17) it is safe to say, certainly given the ambiguities in Aristotle's account pointed out above, that he is making an interpretation of his own, and moreover that his interpretation has as a major constraint that it must counter mainly Stoic criticism of Aristotle, and on the whole criticism that Aristotle himself had never even heard of. For an analysis that rather emphasizes Alexander's effort of making sense of Aristotle, cf. Donini 1987, 1258f. and *passim*.

¹¹¹ Transl. Sharples 1983, *De fato* 183.26–32: [...] οὐ μὴν ταῦτόν τὸ τε ἐκούσιον καὶ τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. ἐκούσιον μὲν γὰρ τὸ ἐξ ἀβιάστου γινόμενον συγκαταθέσεως, ἐφ' ἡμῖν δὲ τὸ γινόμενον μετὰ τῆς κατὰ λόγον τε καὶ κρίσιν συγκαταθέσεως. διὸ εἴ τι μὲν ἐφ' ἡμῖν, τοῦτο καὶ ἐκούσιον, οὐ μὴν πᾶν τὸ ἐκούσιον ἐφ' ἡμῖν. ἐκούσιός μὲν γὰρ καὶ τὰ ἄλογα ζῷα, ὅσα

Thus, Alexander, in spelling out what he sees as the common notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, in the light of Aristotle, opts for an exclusive notion, seeing it as applicable only to rational animals acting 'in accordance with reason and judgment' while still ascribing action and voluntary action to irrational animals. However, again, opting for an exclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν does not imply that one would grant that choice as such is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, only that the *actions resulting from choice* and no other actions are ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The Stoicizing terminology of assent might make us believe that Alexander uses the terminology in the Epictetean sense,¹¹² and that he would automatically then take the further step of saying that assent or choice always depends on us as well. A closer look at this terminology however, shows that Alexander's use of it differs on this very point from Epictetus'. The passage employs something like the following taxonomy of 'assent' (συγκατάθεσις): (1) assent generically speaking; as subsets of (1), (1a) *forced* assent, and (1b) *unforced* assent. As subsets of (1a), (1a1) forced assent *in a rational agent*; and (1a2) forced assent *in a non-rational agent*. As subsets of (1b), (1b1) unforced assent *in accordance with reason and judgment*; and (1b2) unforced assent *not in accordance with reason and judgment*, and as subsets of (1b2), (1b2a) unforced assent not in accordance with reason and judgment *in a rational agent*; (1b2b) unforced assent not in accordance with reason and judgement *in a non-rational agent*.¹¹³ As has been noted in the literature, Alexander, although adopting the Stoic notion of assent uses it in a non-Stoic fashion, in that whereas for the Stoics assent was exclusively applied to humans, *qua* rational agents, Alexander uses it in a much wider sense, presumably applicable to irrational animals as well. Thus, it seems that in applying the Stoicizing terminology of assent (συγκατάθεσις) to the explanation of action generally, i.e. also to non-rational actions, performed by irrational agents, or by in principle rational agents, Alexander simply has to, as it were, on top of the notion of assent, posit the 'unforced assent in accordance with reason and judgment' (1b1) and spell out in further detail what makes it significantly different than other 'unforced assents'.¹¹⁴ His way of handling this problem is, it seems, the seemingly

κατὰ τὴν ὁρμὴν τε καὶ συγκατάθεσιν τὴν ἐν αὐτοῖς ποιεῖ, ποιεῖ, τὸ δὲ ἐπ' αὐτῷ τι εἶναι τῶν γινομένων ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἴδιον ἀνθρώπου. [...].

¹¹² On Epictetus, cf. section 4.4. On Stoic elements in the *De fato* in general, cf. Verbeke 1968.

¹¹³ The same taxonomy is perhaps even more explicit in *Quaestio* III.13, 107.5 Bruns.

¹¹⁴ In fact, Alexander is here using the assent-terminology entirely according to the taxonomy of *EN* III.1–2, with actions from unforced assent corresponding to voluntary

Epictetan move of clearly restricting the scope of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Regarding this interpretation, the association of the notion to choosing has non-Peripatetic, i.e. presumably Epictetan roots, but there seems to be no need to bring forth a new focus on the moral significance of choice at the expense of actions, in order to explain Alexander's move. In addition, Alexander, unlike Epictetus, does not say that choice (in the sense of (1b1) *unforced assent in accordance with reason and judgment*) as such is ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Moreover, the restriction of the application of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Alexander lacks the motivation it had in Epictetus, which I take it was that only with a correct notion of what is and of what is not ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and with the acquired perfected skill of applying that knowledge in particular situations, can one live a good life.¹¹⁵ There seems to be no such motivation for the restriction in Alexander. As a consequence, Alexander never, as has been pointed out, spells out in any detail why he thinks that deliberating, i.e. making an assent become in accordance with reason and judgment, makes such an assent significantly different from other unforced assents.

3.4.1. *A recent interpretation of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Alexander of Aphrodisias*

The views of recent scholarship regarding Alexander's notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the *De fato* differ somewhat. Some divergences might have to do with the quite common way of merely taking the notion (together with the associated ones) to denote some sort of 'freedom' without further spelling out what this would mean.¹¹⁶ The most substantial analyses of the notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Alexander's *De fato* and the

actions, and actions from unforced assent in accordance with reason and judgment corresponding to voluntary actions in accordance with προαίρεσις.

¹¹⁵ A significant example highlighting the general focus on individual ordinary actions is the fact that Alexander in *De fato* ch. xxxii argues that the Gods do not have the power to *be* otherwise than they are, which explains their being honoured rather than praised as virtuous men are, but that they, just like the wise man, have in their power to do or not do individual actions.

¹¹⁶ E.g. Zierl, commenting on *De fato* 182.20–31, 1995, 186 briefly interprets Alexander's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as a notion of freedom. A subtle interpretation of some issues connected to the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the *De fato* is given in Donini 1987, though the analysis is somewhat obscure due to the rendering of (what most likely is) Alexander's notion of ἐξουσία as 'freedom' (libertà). For bibliographical references to the vast literature on the *De fato*, cf. Sharples 1987, 1187ff.; also, Sharples 1983, 287ff. & Thillet 1984, CXLIII ff. On the peculiarities of the terminology in the *De fato*, cf. Todd 1974.

Mantissa are, to my knowledge, Bobzien (1998a)¹¹⁷ and (1998b).¹¹⁸ The two major novelties of Alexander's account that Bobzien identifies are (i) the introduction of the idea that something depending on an agent means that the agent has the *power* over doing and not doing that thing, and (ii) the application of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν to *choice* as such, i.e. not just to states of character and their corresponding activities or external actions.

Bobzien (1998a) thus analyzes Alexander's use of the notion of ἐξουσία (i.e. as used in his *De fato*) in terms of 'power'.¹¹⁹ On this interpretation, Alexander would have replaced the standard Aristotelian term for capacity or power—δύναμις—with a new one—ἐξουσία, while still continuing to use the term δύναμις. The point of such a change or expansion in terminology would regarding this interpretation be two-fold: it provides separate terms for rational and non-rational powers, but it moreover signifies a development of the Aristotelian account of rational powers. This second aspect is what Bobzien sees as the most important point in the *De fato*, namely what she calls the replacement of 'to be capable of' (δύνασθαι) by 'to have the power' (ἐξουσία), in Alexander's account of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν.¹²⁰ The significance of this change, undertaken by Alexander, is that whereas the former way of speaking about τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν would have its origin in the kind of two-sided capacity (δύναμις) of rational animals in Aristotle's *Int.* 13 and *Met.* IX, the latter, on the contrary, provides 'a way to express that the agent is a causally undetermined decision-maker'. Such an 'undetermined decision-maker' is an agent that not only has the 'power (two-sided ability, capacity) to act/choose and not to act/choose', but who moreover has the 'power (authority, control) over acting/choosing and not acting/choosing'.¹²¹ Thus, Bobzien sees Alexander as using τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν as meaning that which we not only have the two-sided ability to choose or not to choose, but that which we moreover have the power, authority over choosing or not choosing. Bobzien points out that Alexander is:

[B]y no means clear and consistent about whether his phrases like 'having the power to do/choose opposites' are to be understood as indeterminist, although in some places he clearly did.¹²²

¹¹⁷ Cf. Bobzien 1998a, 4; 332; 335–336; 353; 355.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Bobzien 1998b, 137–142; 156–175.

¹¹⁹ Bobzien 1998a, 402.

¹²⁰ Bobzien 1998a, 407.

¹²¹ Bobzien 1998a, 407.

¹²² Bobzien 1998a, 410.

The significance of Alexander's notion of ἐξουσία in his account of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, is also pointed out in Bobzien (1998b), where the importance of Alexander's move from merely speaking of 'acting and not acting' as being ἐφ' ἡμῖν, to speaking of 'choosing and not choosing' as being ἐφ' ἡμῖν is also stressed.¹²³ Bobzien identifies several possible sources for Alexander's move in some of his contemporaries' philosophical accounts of choice.¹²⁴ As to the first one, deriving from Aristotle, she states that '[t]here is no evidence that Aristotle maintained that the same agent in the same circumstances could come up with a different choice (προαίρεσις).' Instead, 'his concept of deliberate choice was connected with that which depends on us by the commentators'. A second source is Epictetus, who 'spelling out parts of early Stoic philosophy, restricts that which depends on us to certain "mental events" or movements of the soul.' And who maintained that '[o]nly the use of our impressions, that is giving assent to them or withholding it, depends on us, since these are the only things not subordinate to external force or hindrances.'¹²⁵ The third source is constituted by the 'Middle-Platonist interpretations of Plato with their focus on individual choices of actions'. Bobzien (1998b) argues that the latter two sources, i.e. the non-Peripatetic ones, are the most likely explanations of Alexander's move:

[T]he switch from action to choice, or rather the addition of choice to action, was motivated by a change of focus regarding what is of primary moral relevance: choices rather than actions. [...] Thus it seems that the origin of the term 'to choose' in the account of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is non-Peripatetic, although Alexander generally interprets it in the Aristotelian sense, as choice that is the result of deliberation, and not as fundamental moral choice.¹²⁶

Thus Bobzien concludes that:

Taking the various points together, it seems that the initial grounds for the inclusion of choice in the accounts of what depends on us in Alexander [...] are unlikely to have been the quest for an indeterminist concept of freedom of decision (as opposed to freedom of action), or the question of whether people are causally indeterminist in their choices between alternatives. Rather it is the recognition of choice as the specific

¹²³ Cf. Bobzien 1998b, 159–164.

¹²⁴ Cf. Bobzien 1998b, 159 ff.

¹²⁵ Bobzien 1998b, 160.

¹²⁶ Bobzien 1998b, 163.

activity through which human rational beings can have influence in the world, and accordingly, to which moral appraisal is to be attached. (The issue was autonomy rather than freedom to do otherwise.)¹²⁷

Though Bobzien's accounts of the three contemporary theories of choice might *per se* be correct, it appears to me that her idea, that Alexander's view is that (i) choice is ἐφ' ἡμῶν, and that this is to be explained by the parallel novelty of (ii) seeing choice, and not just actions or characters, as what is most important for moral appraisal, rests on a misinterpretation of Aristotle. I think that while (i) is absent in Aristotle, (ii), at least in the sense Bobzien here describes it, is not. It suffices to quote the initial lines of Aristotle's account of choice in *EN* III, where he states that:

having defined both the voluntary and the involuntary, it remains to give an account of choice; for it seems to be most proper to virtue and to distinguish characters more than actions do.¹²⁸

The idea of deliberate choice as the best mark of character is not only present already in the *EN*, but is the motivation for Aristotle's whole discussion of choice, and the reason why it needs to be properly distinguished from wish, belief etc. Thus, a supposedly new focus on choice rather than actions cannot be the whole explanation for Alexander's move of applying the notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν to choice as well. Moreover, as to (i) as we saw above in analysing Alexander's *De fato*, we should be careful about saying that Alexander applies the notion to choice. Associating it with choice evidently is not the same thing as saying that choice is ἐφ' ἡμῶν. Alexander is in fact merely associating the notion with choice.

3.5. Conclusions concerning Aristotelian notions of ἐφ' ἡμῶν

As we have seen above, the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν seems to have been first introduced into philosophical discussion in Aristotle's *Ethics*. His notion, on the one hand, reveals a concern with making sense of various ordinary language uses of this terminology, thus indicating

¹²⁷ Bobzien 1998b, 163–164.

¹²⁸ *EN* 1111b4–6: [...] Διωρισμένων δὲ τοῦ τε ἐκουσίου καὶ τοῦ ἀκουσίου, περὶ προαιρέσεως ἔπεται διελεῖν· οἰκειότατον γὰρ εἶναι δοκεῖ τῇ ἀρετῇ καὶ μᾶλλον τὰ ἥθη κρίνειν τῶν πρᾶξεων. [...].

that he did not himself take the notion to strictly refer to an already defined philosophical topic. On the other hand, in making sense of these uses, he attempts to situate the notion in a larger ontological picture, thus reflecting a systematic approach, even if this approach is tentative and far from straightforward. The general problem in Aristotle's account, as we have seen, is the vagueness of the condition for something being ἐφ' ἡμῶν *that the origin was in the agent*. As a way of distinguishing the possible implications of this condition, we then distinguished what we called an inclusive from an exclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in Aristotle. The inclusive refers to the notion being in no way tied to rational agency alone. The exclusive refers to the notion being applied to rational agents and their activities alone. In the analyses of the three earliest Aristotelian commentators on the *Ethics*, Aspasius in his commentary on *EN* then seems to opt rather for the inclusive notion. In general though, given the absence of more explicit definitions of the notion, Aspasius remains vague in much the same way as Aristotle. The major point of development in the Anonymous' commentary on *EN* II–V then seems to be that the author, from an isolated remark in *EE*, has extrapolated the idea of the dependency of actions' being ἐφ' ἡμῶν on whether the states they follow from are or are not ἐφ' ἡμῶν, and hence almost replaced Aristotle's standard condition *that the origin is in the agent*. Finally, Alexander of Aphrodisias, in spelling out what he sees as the common notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, in his *De fato* opts for an exclusive notion, seeing it as applicable only to rational animals acting 'in accordance with reason and judgment', while still ascribing action and voluntary action to irrational animals.

CHAPTER FOUR

STOICS

The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, as we have seen, was introduced in a philosophical context already by Aristotle. It is generally agreed that it was the later debates in Hellenistic ethics, provoked by certain seemingly deterministic features of Stoic and Epicurean physics, that established it within common philosophical jargon, and that made the issue of what things are ἐφ' ἡμῖν and what it means that something is ἐφ' ἡμῖν topical.¹ Especially important and provocative in the eyes of the other schools were the contributions of the Early Stoa, i.e. primarily Chrysippus. This is evident from the later sources referring to his position and to the arguments he provided in favour of it, as we will see a bit further ahead. However, as was pointed out before,² it is safe to say that it was only the Roman Stoa, in particular Epictetus, which made the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν absolutely central to Stoic Ethics.

This chapter analyzes various Stoic notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in order to identify the specific traits as well as the development of the Stoic notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.³ Since it has recently been suggested that there was a change between the Early Stoa (e.g. Chrysippus) and the later

¹ For the general issue of the notion and its introduction in philosophical terminology, cf. Dobbin 1998, 65–68; Dobbin's remarks (1998, 67) on the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, while sensitive to the ambiguities in the attributions of it to Chrysippus, are yet somewhat confused by the idea that the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν depicts the same thing as the Stoic notion of ἐλευθερία. This rather common conflation of the two notions and the two respective issues is rightly criticized by Bobzien 1997; Bobzien 1998a, 330f. & Bobzien 1998b, 135.

² Cf. section 1.2.

³ I will stick closely to this very issue *per se* and thus almost entirely leave out many related, though different, issues in Stoic philosophy. For good discussions of the related topics in Stoic ethics, cf. the surveys of Schofield 2003, Inwood 1999, Donini 1999 and Long & Sedley 1987, 344–437. On specific relevant issues, cf. e.g. on the role of 'freedom' in Stoic Ethics, Bobzien 1997; on 'appropriate actions', Inwood 1999 and Brennan 1996; and on the 'following nature' theme specifically, cf. Striker 1991. Also, for extensive treatments of issues related to their philosophy of mind and action, cf. Inwood 1985; Long & Sedley 1987, 266–343, with Long 1970 & Long 1971b; Annas 1992, 37–120; Lesses 1998; Bobzien 1998a; Bobzien 1999; Long 1999; Hankinson 1999a; Hankinson 1999b.

Roman Stoa (e.g. Seneca and Epictetus) in how the notion was understood,⁴ it seems suitable to discuss its role in Stoicism author by author. Thus I will begin by discussing the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the Early Stoic Chrysippus (c. 280–207 BC). Then I move on to the Roman Stoics. I begin by analysing the notion, i.e. in Latin *in nostra potestate*, in Seneca.⁵ I then continue with the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Musonius Rufus (AD c. 30–c. 95),⁶ and in his pupil Epictetus (AD c. 55–c. 135), and finally in Marcus Aurelius (emperor 161–180). At the end of the chapter I draw some general conclusions as to the specific traits, i.e. the similarities and differences in the Stoic notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and also say something on the development within the Stoa, as to the conception of what philosophical issue the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν involved.

4.1. *The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Chrysippus*

The situation of the sources for Chrysippus' account of this notion is, as in the case of most of his views, complicated, and for three main reasons.⁷ The writers whose texts have been seen as sources for his account on this matter are *much later* than Chrysippus, ranging from Cicero (1st cent. BC),⁸ Plutarch (1st–2nd cent. AD), Aulus Gellius (2nd cent. AD),⁹ and Alexander of Aphrodisias (end of 2nd cent. AD), over Clement of Alexandria (2nd–3rd cent. AD) and Plotinus and Origen (middle of 3rd cent. AD), to Nemesis and Eusebius (4th cent. AD). Moreover, these writers are often more or less *hostile* (e.g. Cicero, and even more so Plutarch and Alexander) towards what they take to be Chrysippus' views. An additional source of distortion is that these writers often use Chrysippus' doctrines primarily to make their

⁴ Cf. Bobzien 1998a, 332 and Inwood 1993, 175.

⁵ The Latin *in nostra potestate* is generally taken to be the standard philosophical translation of the Greek ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Cf. Bobzien 1998a, p. 331 f. Also, cf. below the sections on Chrysippus for Cicero's ascription of the notion *in nostra potestate* to Chrysippus in the *De fato*; the section on Seneca; and also the section 5.5.4 on Calcidius *In Timaeum*.

⁶ Cf. Jagu 1979, 7 ff.

⁷ On general issues regarding the sources to Stoic ethics, and the Early Stoics in particular, cf. Inwood 1999, 675 ff. Cf. also Mansfeld 1999b.

⁸ Cicero wrote his *De fato* (which is the relevant text) in 44 BC, cf. Rackham 1942, 189. Dobbin 1998, 65 ff. adds the ref. *Nat. Deor.* III.93, but *in nostra potestate* (ἐφ' ἡμῖν) is absent in *Nat. Deor.*, and though *potestas* is found once, it is strictly used describing the Gods. Cf. van den Bruwaene 1986, 78.

⁹ Aulus Gellius lived c. AD 130–180, cf. *LS*, I, 496.

own points, which means that their references to Chrysippus are made and chosen from the point of view of *a different argumentative agenda than Chrysippus*'. They might thus, intentionally or not, in their reports have confused or simplified elements of his doctrines.

However, even in the light of the above mentioned difficulties regarding the sources, one can easily discern a general feature in most reports: the sources mostly are texts discussing the compatibility of a more or less common notion of something depending on us, i.e. being ἐφ' ἡμῖν, with various aspects of the Stoic, i.e. Chrysippean theory of *fate*.¹⁰ This feature proves that this compatibility, or most often in the sources alleged incompatibility, was the issue that *they* thought the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν primarily involved. In addition however, the sources, in discussing aspects of this issue, also ascribe to Chrysippus himself both arguments regarding how to understand the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν and how this issue should be conceived. This, I take it, proves that Chrysippus himself thought that this was the issue the notion primarily involved as well, and that he presumably, due to criticism, felt an urge to defend his position on the issue by spelling it out in further detail.¹¹ Though the sources are somewhat divergent as to the exact details of Chrysippus' position, it is possible to reconcile most of them to establish a rather coherent picture of Chrysippus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and to do so is the objective in what follows.¹²

¹⁰ Even though the classifications by von Arnim might sometimes blur important distinctions, the sources included in *SVF* illustrate these points quite well (although some of them are not taken to be reliable sources to Chrysippus in the present study): e.g. *SVF* II.939 (=Diogenianus, in Eusebius', *Praep. Evang.* IV.3, 136); 979, 981 & 984; (=Alexander, *De fato*, ch. 26, Bruns); 986 (=Plotinus, *Enn.* III.1.7); 988 (=Origen, *De Principiis*, III, 108, Delarue); 989 (=Origen, *De Oratione* 6, vol. II, 311, 16 Kō.=p. 206, Delarue); 990 (=Origen, *De Principiis*, III, 110 Delarue); 991 (=Nemesius, *De Nat. Hom.*, ch. 35, 258); 992 (=Clement of Alex. *Stromat.* II 458 Pott.); 996 (=Origen, *In Genesim* Tom II, 13 Delarue); 997 (=Plutarch, *de Stoic. Repugn.* 1056b); 998 (=Diogenianus, in Eusebius' *Praep. evang.* VI 265d.); 1001 (=Alexander, *De fato* ch. 33, 205, 1, Bruns); 1003 (=Alexander, *De fato* ch. 35, 207, 4, Bruns); 1004 (=Alexander, *De fato* ch. 36, 210, 3, Bruns); 1006 (=Alexander, *De fato* ch. 38 Bruns); 1007 (=Alexander, *Quaest.* II.4.50, 30 Bruns); 1118 (=Alexander, *Quaest.* II.21.68, 19 Bruns); *SVF* III.32 (=Alexander, *Quaest.* I.14.26 Bruns).

¹¹ On these issues, cf. Frede, D. 1993, 192f.

¹² Donini 1999, 738 argues that what the Stoics say on this issue (and on two in his view distinct issues) was 'only in order to respond to the arguments of their opponents' (whether he means the opponents' reactions to the 'impulse with reservation' view he discusses, or to Stoic physics, is not clear). This could well be correct, but should not be to stressed so as to question that the Stoics really held these views themselves. Notably, even if e.g. Chrysippus developed his notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν only in response to

The purpose, then, of Chrysippus' account of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν appears to have been to show how his theory of fate could account for things commonly held as being ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The reason for this need, then, seems to have been that his theory of fate in the eyes of his opponents seemed to do away with the possibility of anything at all being ἐφ' ἡμῖν.¹³ The debate concerning Chrysippus' success or failure in giving an account of the notion compatible with the Stoic theory of fate in fact constitutes a large part of the later Hellenistic and Imperial period discussion of the issue of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν as well as what a theory of fate should look like.¹⁴ For our present purposes however, we do not have to go into the details of Chrysippus' theory of fate as such,¹⁵ but only to specify the main features of his notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

4.1.1. *A recent interpretation of Chrysippus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν*

One fairly recent and substantial view that we have reasons to largely agree with is the one defended in Bobzien (1998a). It thus seems suitable to briefly point out what the main elements of this interpretation that are relevant to the present study amount to.

On this interpretation, then, Chrysippus in his account of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν stated (i) that (mainly) actions are ἐφ' ἡμῖν, i.e. (ii) that (only)

his opponents, this does not make the view less his, or less Stoic for that matter. Also, in general, it seems to be the case with most philosophical doctrines that they have developed in precisely that way, namely as responses to opponents.

¹³ According to Dobbin 1998, 66–67 exactly what status the notion had in Chrysippus' ethics is far from clear, one reason being that the sources display quite diverging pictures of his notion. Bobzien 1998a, 332, n. 3 says that: 'For Chrysippus neither of the substantivized forms is known. Τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν occurs in Plutarch *Stoic. rep.* 1056d and in a book-title *περὶ τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῖν πρὸς τοὺς Στωικοὺς* Lamprias cat. no. 154. I have not found τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν as (semi-)technical term in any Stoic text before Musonius. (I take the explanatory clause about things that depend on us in Epiph. *Haer.* 3.36 (DD 592.25–26), which is Ascribed to Zeno, to be later and not originally Zenonian)'. Bobzien 1998b, 142, n. 8 states: 'we do not know with certainty which Greek expressions Chrysippus used, but it is likely that ἐπί with *dativus personae* was among them.' She moreover 1998b, 148f. says that the Early Stoics had no 'definition of what depends on us', yet further ahead that 'the Stoics had a one-sided concept of what depends on us—and they were by far not the only ones', Bobzien 1998b, 149.

¹⁴ The best example is probably Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De fato*, naturally arguing that the common notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is incompatible with parts of the Stoic account of fate, and that the Stoic notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is at odds with our common notion. On the ancient arguments against Chrysippus' compatibilism and his replies, cf. Bobzien 1998a, ch. 6.

¹⁵ On Chrysippus theory of fate, cf. the excellent discussions in Bobzien 1998a.

those actions of which we are the possible or actual cause are ἐφ' ἡμῖν; (iii) the way we can become such causes is through using our capacity of assent, and (iv) the fact that human assent 'is neither forced nor fully externally hindered' guarantees the 'freedom from force and external hindrances'.¹⁶ In what follows I will agree with most of this. Still, the textual basis, I take it, will demand that we slightly modify or specify (i) as well as (iv). As it stands, (iv), as will become clear further on in the chapter, rather matches with the accounts of assent in later Roman Stoicism.¹⁷

A more general issue, where I largely align myself to the interpretation in Bobzien (1998a), regards the overall conception of what issue is at stake. Notably, in approaching the sources to e.g. Chrysippus' position on this issue, it is important not to assume that what is at stake is some idea of responsibility of an agent as demanding alternative possibilities of action. In fact, there is no evidence that Chrysippus and his opponents in the Hellenistic debate were arguing from any such intuitions, but rather, they all seem to have been arguing from some idea of responsibility as demanding the autonomy of the agent as cause of his own actions.¹⁸ However, even if we grant that this is more or less the

¹⁶ Bobzien 1998a, 330: 'By 'that which depends on us' (*in nostra potestate*, ἐφ' ἡμῖν) and 'that which happens because of us' (παρ' ἡμῶς) Chrysippus seems to have understood simply the things (mainly actions) of which we, *qua* rational beings, are the possible or actual cause. Such causal origination is brought about by the faculty of assent. The freedom from force and external hindrances was guaranteed by the use of this very mechanism through which we become the cause of our actions. For it is part of the nature of this mental capacity that human assent is neither forced nor fully externally determined'. A noteworthy fact is that, as Bobzien 1998a, 331f. points out, the notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν occurs in Chrysippus in the part of Stoic philosophy called 'physics', and more specifically, within psychology, i.e. 'embedded in a psychological theory'. Bobzien 1998a, 332 concludes: 'Given that the existence of things that depend on us was considered a necessary condition for moral responsibility, Chrysippus thus secured a basic prerequisite for ethics. But there is no clear evidence that the notion of what depends on us was topical within early Stoic ethics.' Still, evidently, these divisions of philosophy did not hinder that what they said within ethics was based on their physics and that everyone else took their physics as having direct consequences for their ethics.

¹⁷ I.e. in Musonius Rufus and Epictetus, both of whom expressed (iv) in a formula-like manner. On their views of assent, cf. sections 4.3 & 4.4.

¹⁸ Bobzien 1998a, 279: '[W]e have no reason to assume that Chrysippus, or his opponents, were involved in a debate about the compatibility of freedom to do otherwise and causal determinism, nor that they based moral appraisal directly on the idea that the agent could have done otherwise (MR2). Rather, all our texts suggest that both Chrysippus and his opponents argued on the basis of the idea that the agent's autonomy is a necessary—and sufficient—condition for moral responsibility (MR1). The Hellenistic controversy was about the problem how, if a person's behaviour is in

view about moral responsibility at stake in the Hellenistic debates, and that Chrysippus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν will be based on the same intuition, we will have to go into further detail in order to see how this is spelled out.

Yet another issue where the analysis given in Bobzien (1998a) is relevant to the present study concerns the type of things to which the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is applied. Bobzien argued that (a) this question was no issue for Chrysippus, i.e. that there was a general agreement about it. She also argued that (b) Chrysippus (unlike Epictetus) did not give an account of which things in general were or were not ἐφ' ἡμῖν, since for Chrysippus the individual case had to be examined to decide whether something was ἐπὶ the agent.¹⁹ Though this is not entirely clear, I take it that the way in which (a) and (b) make sense is, in that while Chrysippus took there to be no issue of *what type* of things the notion could be applied to, he meant that whether something *of that type* in the specific situation actually was ἐπὶ the agent or not was an issue that had to be settled by examination of the particular facts. Now, this feature of Chrysippus' notion is something Bobzien takes as a proof of a difference between his notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν and what we find in Epictetus. The extent to which this is correct and the extent to which the difference is superficial is a point we shall come back to later on, having analyzed the sources of Chrysippus, and again when having analyzed the notion in Epictetus.²⁰

accordance with fate, the individual person can nevertheless be causally responsible and be held morally accountable for it'.

¹⁹ Bobzien 1998a, 332: 'Chrysippus also did not ask what the things were which depend on us. It appears that he took it for granted that there was a general agreement about that question. For Epictetus, on the other hand, the main concern is which the particular kinds of things are that depend on us. The two topics were also terminologically differentiated: Chrysippus was concerned with what was later called τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν; Epictetus is primarily interested in τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, i.e. the kinds of things that depend on us. With this difference in interest there goes hand in hand a difference in how the expression 'depending on us' is used. According to Chrysippus, something depends on me if I, *qua* rational being, am causally responsible either for its occurring (by assenting to the relevant impression), or for its not occurring (by withholding assent to the relevant impression). Hence (i) the element of causation, and in this sense, of self-origination is predominant, and (ii) in order to determine whether something depends on me, the individual case has to be examined [...] according to Chrysippus, if I take a walk and nothing hinders me from walking, my walking depends on me (I caused it by assenting to an impulsive impression of the kind 'you should take a walk').'

²⁰ For a brief yet informative analysis of the sources to the early Stoic notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, cf. Frede, D. 2003, 192–205.

What is given below, then, is a very brief account of the sources strictly from the point of view of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.²¹

4.1.2. *Interpretation of the sources of Chrysippus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν*

Cicero, in *De fato* 40, describing the context of Chrysippus' account of *fate*, does not give us Chrysippus' own Greek terminology. Instead, he ascribes to Chrysippus a notion of *in nostra potestate*, and the issue evidently involves some things being *in nostra potestate*, namely, their being so must be accounted for by any of the theories of fate, including the Chrysippean one, and we can assume that this is a translation of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.²² Cicero here briefly reports Chrysippus' distinction between the two kinds of causes. According to this distinction there are on the one hand '*principal*' and '*perfect*' causes, and on the other hand

²¹ For a detailed and rather comprehensive account of the specific arguments of these sources and a discussion of some previous interpretations, cf. Bobzien 1998a, ch. 6.

²² Cicero, *De fato* 40, ascribes the notion of *in nostra potestate* not to Chrysippus but to a different group of philosophers opposing some 'Ancient philosophers' who on Cicero's interpretation had identified fate with force and necessity, i.e. the formers denied the fate principle *omnia fato fieri*. These opposing philosophers would have used *in nostra potestate* much the way Aristotle in *EN* III.1 used ἐφ' ἡμῖν, i.e. holding that what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν is that of which the cause (*causa*) is situated in us (*est sita in nobis*). Still, the arguments of these opponents show that they at least took everyone else as well to not only use this terminology, but moreover grant acts of assent (*assensiones*) and actions (*actiones*) to be *in nostra potestate*, and took this to be a 'phenomenon' that any theory of fate would have to save or account for. Rackham 1942, 190–191; 235, while *ad loc.* translating 'in our power', still paraphrases Chrysippus' position here as being about 'free-will', and 'freedom of will' and 'freedom'. Similarly, Yon 1933, I, while *ad loc.* translating 'en notre pouvoir', still states that Chrysippus' aim is reconciling 'le libre arbitre' with his theory of fate. I think it is misleading to impose any notion of 'free-will', or 'le libre arbitre' on Chrysippus here. The much quoted formula in *De fato* 20, *mens hominis voluntate libera spoliata*, 'the human soul robbed of free will' (i) is not presented as having been stated or defended by anyone, thus not by Chrysippus either, but on the contrary (ii) is Cicero's own view of what follows from introducing an everlasting series of causes. Thus, the formula is used by Cicero speaking *in propria persona*, not in quoting or paraphrasing anyone, least of all Chrysippus. Contrast this with *De fato* 23, where Cicero straightforwardly ascribes to Epicurus to have come up with his idea of uncaused atomic movements when fearing that otherwise 'there would be nothing free in us' (*nihil liberum nobis esset*). The people described in *De fato* 39, using the formula *animorum motus voluntarii* (voluntary motions of souls), and *necessitate motus animorum liberates* (movements of souls free from necessity) do not include Chrysippus, whose relation to these people Cicero describes vaguely and rhetorically only to indicate that he failed in what he attempted to do. That pointing out this failure might be the whole purpose of Cicero's account of Chrysippus' position is indicated by A. Gellius, *NA* VII.ii.15.

‘auxiliary’ and ‘proximate’ causes. Chrysippus argues, using this distinction, that while it does follow from the fate principle, i.e. *everything happens according to fate*, that *everything happens from antecedent causes*, it does not follow that *everything happens from ‘principal’ and ‘perfect’ (antecedent) causes*, but only that *everything happens from ‘auxiliary’ and ‘proximate’ (antecedent) causes*. The point is that even though these ‘auxiliary’ and ‘proximate’ causes *themselves* do not depend on us (*in nostra potestate*), they are such that it does not follow from this fact that impulse (*appetitus*) as well does not depend on us (*in nostra potestate*).²³ That would presumably have been the case, had all causes of our impulses been of the other kind, i.e. ‘perfect’ and ‘principal’ causes, which presumably the opponents thought Chrysippus originally meant.

Thus, granted this Chrysippean distinction, the fate principle that *everything happens according to fate* is compatible with the idea that impulse depends on us (*in nostra potestate*).²⁴

Moreover, from Cicero’s immediately following account of Chrysippus’ cylinder simile, we get the argument that just like a cylinder made to roll has been given its beginning of motion from the outside but has its capacity to roll from its own nature, so, in a similar way, even though an occurring sense-object (*visum obiectum*) will truly impress and as it were seal its form (*species*) in the soul, still the assent (*assensio*) nevertheless depends on us (*in nostra potestate*). Thus, assent, while given ‘a push’ from the outside, will move by its own force and nature.²⁵

Quite puzzlingly, Cicero somewhat further ahead says that Chrysippus, together with another group of philosophers, would have approved the distinction between (i) cases where antecedent causes have occurred so that it does not depend on us to prevent certain of their results from

²³ Cicero, *De fato*, 41 Rackham: [...] *Quae si ipsae non sunt in nostra potestate, non sequitur ut ne appetitus quidem sit in nostra potestate.* [...].

²⁴ As Bobzien 1998a, 216; 216, n. 64 & 1998b, sections 2–5, has pointed out, while it is evident that the first, external causal factor is a proximate and plausibly an auxiliary cause, there is no evidence either for what seems to be the received view of the second, internal, causal factor, i.e. that it must be a perfect and principal cause, or for the view that perfect and principal causes co-operate with auxiliary and proximate causes in one and the same causation. I agree with this observation, and will thus simply suspend judgment on this point. For a survey of some of the issues with this distinction, cf. Frede, D. 2003, 186–192.

²⁵ Cicero, *De fato* 43 Rackham [...] *‘Ut igitur,’ inquit, ‘qui protrusit cylindrum dedit ei principium motionis, volubilitatem autem non dedit, sic visum obiectum imprimet illud quidem et quasi signabit in animo suam speciem, sed assensio nostra erit in potestate, eaque, quemadmodum in cylindro dictum est, extrinsecus pulsa quod reliquum est suapte vi et natura movebitur.’* [...].

happening, and (ii) cases where antecedent causes have occurred but it still depends on us to make the event turn out otherwise. I take this last point to be entirely of Cicero's own making, since it does not follow from what he previously reported Chrysippus as saying, nor does the idea of a capacity to do otherwise, as seems to be understood in (ii),²⁶ appear likely to be part of Chrysippus' account. The distinction between the two kinds of causes would have been superfluous if Chrysippus had already granted a class of cases where the agent in the light of antecedent causes could have done otherwise than he in fact did. The distinction between the two kinds of causes implies, I take it, that he did not grant such a class of cases. The cylinder simile as well fits badly with such a class. The simile indicates that the disposition to roll is to be explained wholly with reference to the subject itself, but there is no room for the cylinder, being pushed, not to roll as the cylinder it is, i.e. forward. That would have demanded it having a capacity to *become* different, e.g. turn into, say, a cone. But in Chrysippus' simile the cone on the contrary corresponds to a different agent, who, by being different, has the capacity to, when pushed, roll *in a circle*. Chrysippus' simile simply compares the individual difference in capacity between two agents to the difference in 'roll-ability' between a cylinder (having a capacity to roll *forward*) and a cone (having a capacity to roll *in a circle*). A plausible explanation for Cicero's misrepresentation of Chrysippus on this point is his quite annoying effort to prove that Chrysippus and the other, quite evidently very different group of philosophers, beyond the terminological varieties, held the same view, which they clearly, from his own report, did not.

Thus, to conclude, according to Cicero's *De fato*, Chrysippus' distinction of two kinds of causes involved the claim that impulse (*appetitus*) depends on us (*in nostra potestate*), his cylinder-simile involved the claim that assent (*assensio*) depends on us (*in nostra potestate*), and Chrysippus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν would have been such that for some act (in a wide sense) *x* of our's to depend on us (*in nostra potestate*) it must be the case that *x* comes about by external 'proximate' and 'auxiliary' antecedent causes *and* by our own force and nature (*vi et natura*).²⁷

²⁶ To make more sense of Cicero's point here, one might want to opt for the alternative reading that the distinction is one, within the things that are fated, between things in which we have no causal part at all, like that it was raining this morning, and things in which we do have a causal part, like that we went for a walk this morning. However, this point seems too obvious for Chrysippus to make and for Cicero to report.

²⁷ Cicero, just after his account of Chrysippus' distinction of two kinds of causes

Aulus Gellius in *NA* VII.ii.6–12, ascribes to Chrysippus the view that (i) the natural capacities of our minds are subject to fate, according to their individual nature and quality.²⁸ This is spelled out as meaning that (ii) it is through our voluntary impulse (*voluntario impetu*) that *some of us*, i.e. those fashioned by nature for health and usefulness, avoid the external force and threat of fate and *others*, i.e. the rough, ignorant, crude, and without any support from education, end up committing sins or faults. Here as well, Chrysippus is ascribed the cylinder simile, which just as in Cicero's *De fato*, is used to distinguish the initial external cause of the cylinder's being set in movement, from its nature, i.e. its 'roll-ability', as responsible for its continuing to roll in a certain way. Chrysippus' explanation of the simile is more or less the same:

just so the order, the law, and the necessity of fate set in motion the various classes of things and the beginnings of causes, but the impulse of deliberations and thoughts, and actions themselves, are regulated by one's own impulse and the characteristics of one's mind.²⁹

Though the notion of *in nostra potestate* is not used here, nor, ascribed to Chrysippus, it seems fairly clear that the cylinder simile passage, which Aulus Gellius reports as being a quote from the fourth book of

and the cylinder simile, goes on (*De fato*, 44–46) to argue that Chrysippus' position and another one which defended that assent (i) does not take place by fate, because (ii) assent is not (even) prompted by the proximate and contiguous cause, would both amount to the same thing (*De fato* 44.6), and that the difference between them would be one of words not one of fact (*De fato* 44.17). His argument does not seem convincing. The latter group as far as he describes it would have no, or an entirely different explanation, of how action comes about, and probably a different physics, i.e. a different account of what a cause is or of what kinds of causes there are. Cicero, in attempting to list the similarities, rather lists the differences, namely, that the latter group do not grant (a) the fate pinciple that *everything happens according to fate*, or (b) that *everything happens from antecedent causes*, not even in the Chrysippean sense (c) that *everything happens from 'auxiliary' and 'proximate' causes*, or that (d) fate is present also in cases where the matters depend on us (*in nostra potestate*), because they defend that (e) only cases where antecedent causes have occurred so that it does not depend on us (*in nostra potestate*) to make the things turn out differently happen from fate. The last piece of information I take to indicate that the group in question had a notion of things being *in nostra potestate* that included (f) a criterion of something like alternative possibilities for an agent in one and the same situation. Thus, saying that the position of this group and the one of Chrysippus amounted to saying the same thing is quite absurd.

²⁸ A. Gellius, *NA* VII.ii.7–8 Marshall: [...] '*ingenia tamen ipsa mentium nostrarum proinde sunt fato obnoxia, ut proprietas eorum est ipsa et qualitas.*' [...].

²⁹ A. Gellius, *NA* VII.ii.11–12 Marshall: [...] '*Sicut*' inquit '[...] *sic ordo et ratio et necessitas fati genera ipsa et principia causarum mouet, impetus uero consiliorum mentiumque nostrarum actionesque ipsas uoluntas cuiusque propria et animorum ingenia moderantur.*' [...].

Chrysippus' *On providence*, makes the same point as in Cicero, namely that two different agents by their particular dispositions, just like two objects of different geometrical types, though equally subject to fate, do think and act differently, and in this sense their desires, reactions and actions do depend on *them*, and cannot be explained solely by reference to the order of fate.

Two differences can be noted: first of all, according to Aulus Gellius, it seems that Chrysippus claimed that not only impulses (*impetus*) following from our reasonings, but also actions (*actiones*) (which I take it refers to external actions) depend on us as well. Secondly, the way Aulus Gellius makes the point of the beginnings of causes being subject to fate as opposed to what depends on us, would seem to imply that that which depends on us is not subject to fate. However, it would be unreasonable to think that Chrysippus held this view. Such a view would have to be backed up by some form of quite non-Stoic ontological dualism between the mind as excluded from the reach of fate, and the events external to it as included in fate. Moreover, the distinction between the beginnings of causes in the cylinder simile would be entirely redundant if one granted any such independency of 'the inner' from 'the outer'. It is thus reasonable to think that if Aulus Gellius should be interpreted as done here, as ascribing to Chrysippus the idea that fate includes the beginnings of causes but not the mind, he is likely to have added this element to the account he claims to refer to in Chrysippus' *On providence*.³⁰

Alexander in his *De fato*³¹ indicates that Chrysippus defined ἐφ' ἡμῖν as 'what happens by us' (τὸ γινόμενον δι' ἡμῶν),³² and that it 'is in', or 'is

³⁰ Given that Aulus Gellius first seems to have correctly understood the Chrysippean account, as we know it from Cicero's *De fato*, but then seems to contradict that interpretation, one might suspect that he does not clearly distinguish the Chrysippean solution from those of some Middle Platonists, who as we will see, were happy to restrict the reach of fate in order to save τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Cf. section 5.5.

³¹ No names of the opponents are mentioned by Alexander, but he is generally taken to be attacking the Stoics, and more precisely Chrysippus and the so-called fate principle, that *all things happen in accordance with fate*, to which he both presents a Peripatetic alternative account of fate, also attempting to show the absurd consequences of the fate principle.

³² *SVF* II.979.3–4: [...] λέγουσιν ἐφ' ἡμῖν εἶναι τὸ γινόμενον (καθ' ὁρμήν) δι' ἡμῶν [...] (=Alex. *De fato* 181.14, Bruns: [...] λέγουσιν ἐφ' ἡμῖν εἶναι τὸ γινόμενον καὶ δι' ἡμῶν [...]). Thus, Bruns' καὶ (based on the Mss) is emended by καθ' ὁρμήν in *SVF*, but should be deleted acc. to Sharples 1983, 245. Though seemingly superfluous, I take it that the reason for the καὶ being there (whether put there by Alexander or a later

to be referred to', impulse and assent (ἐν τῇ ὁρμῇ τε καὶ συγκαταθέσει).³³ At one point, Alexander indicates that the, on his view much too weak, definition of ἐφ' ἡμῶν as what happens by impulse, or as the movement according to impulse (ἢ καθ' ὁρμὴν κίνησις) could be interpreted as meaning 'what is brought about by something (τὸ ὑπὸ τινος γινόμενον) according to its own nature (κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν φύσιν) *depends on it*'.³⁴ Naturally, Alexander sees this notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν as unnatural and unsatisfactory, but what he reports about Chrysippus is compatible with what we were told in Cicero and Aulus Gellius. It is somewhat unclear though, whether Alexander takes Chrysippus to mean that impulse and assent are ἐφ' ἡμῶν, or that it is *by* impulse and assent, as expressions of the agent's own nature that something else in turn, say an *action* is called ἐφ' ἡμῶν.

Some of the above discussed elements of the more complex picture of Chrysippus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν given in Cicero, Aulus Gellius, and Alexander are also supported in Plutarch, Origen, and Clement.

First of all, in Plutarch's report on Chrysippus' views, we get no explicit definition of ἐφ' ἡμῶν. It seems, though, that according to Plutarch's reading, Chrysippus argued that *assent to our impressions* was ἐφ' ἡμῶν.³⁵ This is then consistent with the accounts of Cicero and Aulus Gellius, and plausibly with the one in Alexander.

Secondly, these views are moreover consistent with a passage in Clement of Alexandria from which we get the information that Chrysippus³⁶ held that *all assents* (συγκαταθέσεις) are ἐφ' ἡμῶν. Clement more-

hand), could well be the desire to capture the fact that in Chrysippus' view, the actions etc. that are ἐφ' ἡμῶν are not exceptions to the fate principle, and thus equally come about from antecedent causes, but precisely, have the feature that they come about by our contribution *also*, a feature absent in cases of what is not ἐφ' ἡμῶν.

³³ *SVF* II.981: [...] ἐν τῇ ὁρμῇ τε καὶ συγκαταθέσει τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν φασιν εἶναι [...] (=Alex. *De fato* 183.22–23 Bruns). Cf. *SVF* II.986 (cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* III.1.7, who, like Alexander *De fato* Ch. 14 Bruns, argues that in the Stoic, i.e. Chrysippean compatibilism of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν and the determinism of our impulses by precedent causes, only the name τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν is preserved, since 'our having impulses' is insufficient for them being ἐφ' ἡμῶν, as they are predetermined). The criticism at least gives us the information that Chrysippus *had* a specific the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν.

³⁴ *De fato* 211.30–31 Bruns: [...] τὸ ὑπὸ τινος κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν γινόμενον φύσιν ἐπ' ἐκείνῳ [...] = *SVF* II.1006 (who has ἀπὸ τινος, which could be a misprint).

³⁵ I.e. the 'self-contradiction' that Plutarch, at *de Stoic. Repugn.* 1056.C.11–1056.D.4, finds in Chrysippus' view is presumably the idea of compatibilism of assent depending on us with the fate principle that everything happens in accordance with fate.

³⁶ Literally, οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς, Clem. Alex. *Stromata* 2.12.55.1.1.

over gives the explanation that assent was a notion generically covering all belief (δόξα), judgment (κρίσις, ὑπόληψις) and pieces of learning (μάθησις).³⁷

Thirdly, Origen, in his *in Genesim*,³⁸ moreover seems to refer to the Chrysippean point that the *causes* of many things that depend on us do mostly not *in themselves* depend on us (ἐφ' ἡμῶν), though he in general seems to refer to the notion in later Stoics.³⁹

A rather complex picture is moreover provided by Nemesisius in his *De natura hominis*. From Nemesisius, we learn that Chrysippus thought the fate principle, i.e. that *all things happen according to fate*, was compatible with some notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν. The examples Nemesisius brings forth imply that he takes Chrysippus to have defined what is ἐφ' ἡμῶν as the activities we engage in (i) *following our impulse*, which are always in accordance with fate (ii) *when no external factors hinder us*. Nemesisius mentions assenting, and having and following an impulse (τὸ συγκατατίθεσθαι

³⁷ Clem. Alex. *Stromata* 2.12.54.5-4-1.3, Stählin, Früchtel & Treu: [...] τὰς δὲ συγκαταθέσεις οὐ μόνον οἱ ἀπὸ Πλάτωνος, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς ἐφ' ἡμῶν εἶναι λέγουσιν. πᾶσα οὖν δόξα καὶ κρίσις καὶ ὑπόληψις καὶ μάθησις, οἷς ζῶμεν καὶ σύνεσμεν αἰεὶ τῷ γένει τῶν ἀνθρώπων, συγκαταθέσεις ἐσιν [...] Clement, in identifying assent with faith (πίστις) here, seems to simply bring together philosophical views supporting that assent in a wide sense depends on us only in order to then make a similar point about faith.

³⁸ Origen, *Commentarii in Genesim* (frag.) 12.69.14-21 Delarue: [...] "Ὅτι μέντοι γε πολλῶν τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῶν αἰτία πλείστα τῶν οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῶν ἐστί, καὶ ἡμεῖς ὁμολογήσομεν ὡν μὴ γενομένων, λέγω δὲ τῶν οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, οὐκ ἂν τὰδε τινὰ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῶν ἐπράττετο· πρᾶττεται δὲ τὰδε τινὰ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῶν ἀκόλουθα τοῖσδε τοῖς προγενομένοις, οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῶν ἐνδεχομένου τοῦ ἐπὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς προγενομένοις, καὶ ἕτερα πράττει παρ' ἃ πρᾶττεται. [...] 'That indeed, the cause, of many things that depend on us, mostly does not [in itself] depend on us, even we will agree to. When these have not occurred (I mean those not depending on us), one would not do such or such of the things which *do* depend on us, but [rather] one does such or such of the things that *do* depend on us that are in conformity with certain antecedent events, [in themselves] not depending on us. Because it is possible to, with the same antecedents, do different things than the ones we do.' The reference was taken as an early Stoic fragment by von Arnim, *SVF* II.996, who wrongly, I take it, also included the following paragraph as well. The last remark might seem clearly un-Chrysippean. However, if Origen refers to the fact that the agent *x* would act differently than agent *y* in the same circumstances, this might as well be a version of the cylinder and cone simile.

³⁹ Many passages in Origen have been taken to be Chrysippean fragments reporting on the notion of what is ἐφ' ἡμῶν, e.g. in *SVF* and onwards. However, *SVF* II.988 (=Origen, *De principiis* 3.1.5.12 Görgemanns & Karpp) refers to the later Stoic Epictetus' position that the *χοῆσις φαντασιῶν* is what depends on us (as is observed by Görgemanns & Karpp, *ad loc.* n. 12); *SVF* II.989 (=Origen, *De Oratione* 6.2, Koetschau= 206, 435, Delarue), addresses 'those thinking that nothing depends on us', which is unlikely to be Chrysippus, or any Stoic; the same goes for *SVF* 990 (=Origen, *De Pincipiis* III.1.5. (p. 474) Görgemanns & Karpp).

καὶ ὁρμᾶν) but his example really focuses on the case of walking.⁴⁰ It is somewhat unclear whether the view he ascribes to Chrysippus is that assenting and desiring are not ἐφ' ἡμῖν, but that they make our actions (when nothing opposes their realization) ἐφ' ἡμῖν, or if it is the view that although the condition specified mentions action, it implies that assenting and entertaining impulses as well qualify as being ἐφ' ἡμῖν,⁴¹ but that the condition simply is designed foremost to capture the more difficult case of the sense in which external action can be ἐφ' ἡμῖν.⁴² The passage runs as follows:

And in this way also to the animal, assenting and desiring [is given according to fate], and when none of the things external and in accordance with fate opposes this impulse, then 'walking' would fulfil [the criterion for] depending on us and we would truly walk.⁴³

It might well be that Nemesius distorts the true Chrysippean picture here, but as to the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, we in fact get some quite interesting information. Chrysippus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν would have been one allowing that external action can be ἐφ' ἡμῖν; moreover, that the two necessary and together sufficient conditions for the action of an agent being ἐφ' ἡμῖν would have been (i) that the agent acted on his own impulse, where 'impulse', given the previous line, must be read as covering both 'assenting and desiring (entertaining an impulse)', and (ii) that there were no external factors (equally in accordance with fate) that opposed, i.e. hindered the action, in this case walking.

⁴⁰ In Burgundio of Pisa's medieval translation of *NH* ὁρμᾶν is rendered as '*secundum impetum moveri*', probably an interpretation of the verb in the light of the following example of walking. Cf. Verbeke & Moncho 1975, 134.

⁴¹ I.e. since this is what Nemesius attempts to refute, by showing it incompatible with and ruled out by the fate principle. *NH* XXXV, 291 f. (p. 105, 6 ff. Morani).

⁴² It has been supposed, cf. Inwood 1985, 88–89, that Nemesius here for polemical reasons distorts the Stoic view in attributing to all animals assent (συγκαταθέσεις) and impulse (ὁρμή), thus omitting the Stoic distinction between human (rational) behaviour, to which the analysis in terms of assent (συγκαταθέσεις) really only applies, and non-human (irrational) animal behaviour. The trick of Nemesius in the passage would thus be labeling 'assent' the 'yielding to presentations' which the Stoics applied only to irrational animals, and then taking this to be what human assent would amount to as well, thus omitting reason as well as man's own determination of his assenting or not. Cf. Inwood 1985, 88–89, n. 220 & n. 221.

⁴³ *NH* 291.12 ff. Morani: [...] οὕτω καὶ τῷ ζῳῳ τὸ συγκατατίθεσθαι καὶ ὁρμᾶν, ὅταν δὲ ταύτῃ τῇ ὁρμῇ μὴδὲν ἀντιπῆσῃ τῶν ἔξωθεν καὶ καθ' εἰμαρμένην, τότε τὸ περιπατεῖν τέλει ἐφ' ἡμῖν εἶναι καὶ πάντως περιπατήσομεν [...]. The immediately following passage states [...] οἱ ταῦτα λέγοντες (εἰσὶ δὲ τῶν Στωικῶν Χρύσιππος τε καὶ Φίλοπάτωρ καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ καὶ λαμπροὶ) [...].

Actually, we do not have to take Nemeseius to intentionally blur the distinction between rational man and irrational beast, precisely because he speaks of assenting and brings up a typically human example. Rather, then, we should see him as speaking only about humans in the present passage.⁴⁴

Now, is the account consistent with what we have from the previous sources? Someone might think that the, as it were, additional condition (ii), since it seems to be absent in the other sources, would signify a diversion from the others. However, first of all, (ii) only applies to the issue as to whether a specific *action* is ἐφ' ἡμῶν or not. Secondly, the sources mentioning actions, but not mentioning (ii) obviously must assume that (ii), in one sense at least, is fulfilled, i.e. they assume that the action has been carried out or realized. To rephrase this, we could say that they are talking of situations where an action has already been carried out. Nemeseius' including (ii) thus implies that he does not speak only of situations where an action has already been carried out, but rather that he is speaking more generally of what is ἐφ' ἡμῶν. This feature, i.e. of adapting the conditions for something to be ἐφ' ἡμῶν, so as to be able to say something more general than what applies to *post factum* situations, thus resembles the feature we will encounter further ahead in Epictetus.

4.1.3. *Conclusions concerning Chrysippus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν*

Bobzien (1998a) as we saw above, argued that Chrysippus held (i) that (mainly) actions are ἐφ' ἡμῶν, i.e. (ii) that (only) those actions of which we are the possible or actual cause are ἐφ' ἡμῶν, (iii) the way we can become such causes is through using our capacity of assent, and (iv) the fact that human assent 'is neither forced nor fully externally hindered' guarantees the 'freedom from force and external hindrances'.⁴⁵ Given the analysis of the sources carried out above, then, we should modify or specify (i) and revise (iv).

⁴⁴ Inwood 1985, 284, n. 221 collects references asserting that the 'walking-example' was used by the Stoic themselves, and gives some earlier sources as well. I believe that Aristotle's use of typically human context examples, like 'walking' in *De Motu Animalium*, is a useful reference in that it shows that merely by using a specific example a writer may indicate that the explanation of the example has no intention of covering more than the very subjects to which the example applies, i.e. humans exclusively, which I also take it Nemeseius is doing here.

⁴⁵ Cf. section 4.1.1.

First of all, in relation to (i), it is indeed the case that some of the sources state that what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν is *actions*, notably Aulus Gellius, (plausibly) Alexander, Origen, and Nemesis. Moreover, the account that these sources provide regarding Chrysippus' *conditions* for an *action* to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν—i.e. in case they provide anything at all—implies that for Chrysippus, an action is ἐφ' ἡμῖν if and only if it occurred by the agent's own impulse, (where 'impulse' is generic for 'assenting' and 'desiring'), as in Nemesis and Alexander. In relation to this, it is noteworthy that this is in two cases (Cicero and Alexander) interpreted as acting from one's own nature. Some sources in addition state that what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν is *impulse*, notably Cicero, Aulus Gellius, and perhaps Alexander. However, some sources state that *assent* as such is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, notably Cicero, Plutarch, Clement and (perhaps) Alexander. In these cases, though, the sources provide no information of what Chrysippus would have thought were the conditions for an assent to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν. A plausible way of interpreting this is that these sources took the point to be that *all* cases of assent are ἐφ' ἡμῖν.⁴⁶ In relation to (iv) above then, the conclusions to draw are, I think, on the one hand, that the sources claiming that Chrysippus held that what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν is action, do not refer, in their explanations, to assent *qua not determined*. Rather, they refer to assent (and desire) *qua making a contribution* to the action coming about. That this is so is also emphasized by the cases where action that is ἐφ' ἡμῖν is spelled out in terms of action from one's own nature. On the other hand, those sources that ascribe to Chrysippus the view that what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν is *assents*, might seem to assume the view that assents are 'by definition' not determined by anything external etc. However, this is never explicitly stated. Moreover, among these sources, especially Cicero stresses that what is at stake is that assent contributes to the causation initiated by external factors.⁴⁷ Thus, the issue for Chrysippus is in general to spell out that we make a contribution to

⁴⁶ Although Clement's talking of 'all assents', does not, I take it, directly refer to 'all tokens of assent', it seems that 'all types of assent' here includes 'all tokens of all types of assent'.

⁴⁷ One way of reading these sources is then, naturally, that there are two different senses in which something can be called ἐφ' ἡμῖν, since assent and impulse are called ἐφ' ἡμῖν by virtue of expressing our own nature and capacity, while actions in the strict sense are called ἐφ' ἡμῖν by being expressions of our acts of assent and impulse, and only derivatively expressions of our own nature and capacity. There are no signs that the sources thought Chrysippus made such a distinction, however.

our actions such that our actions cannot be explained solely in terms of the preceding external causes, but must make reference to us as well. Moreover, Chrysippus should be seen as working with an exclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, since in his view, human action by definition follows from assent, and assent by definition is an act of the rational ruling part of the soul.⁴⁸

4.2. Seneca's notion of *in nostra potestate*

In Seneca, we obviously do not encounter the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. However, as was pointed out in relation to Cicero's *De fato* as a source to Chrysippus' views, we have reasons to take the notion of *in nostra potestate* to be the established Latin translation of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Seneca in fact develops a distinctive notion of *in nostra potestate*, and we find it in several places, both in the *Dialogues*, notably in the *De beneficiis*, *De ira*, *De brevitate vitae*, *Ad Marciam de consolatione* and *Ad Helviam matrem de consolatione*, as well as in the *Letters*, i.e. in *Ad Lucilium epistulae morales* 85, 86, and 91.

In the *De beneficiis* V, we learn that:

[I]f we are prevented from showing ourselves most grateful, it will be the fault, not of ourselves, but of something from without that intervenes and deters us. Yet in intention we shall not be outdone, nor shall we be disgraced if we are overpowered by things that do not *depend on us*. (my italics)⁴⁹

The point here is quite simple: i.e. when we are hindered—by some factor which is not *in nostra potestate*—to perform what we should do, e.g. repay some benefit, our failure to do so will have no consequences for our social or moral status. The remark also hints that one perhaps paradigmatic example of what is not *in nostra potestate* is an external factor (*aliquid extrinsecus*). The remark then would seem to imply that

⁴⁸ Cf. e.g. Annas 1992, 56–70 & 89–102. As we saw in chapter 3, Alexander in his *De fato* elaborates a taxonomy using the stoicizing terminology of assent, and thus posits unforced non-rational assents, corresponding to Aristotle's notion of what is voluntary and yet non-rational, but this notion of 'assent' does not correspond to what we have reason to ascribe to Chrysippus.

⁴⁹ Transl. Basore 1964 slightly modified. *De beneficiis* V.v.4. Préchac: [...] *quia non per nos erit mora, quominus gratissimi simus, sed interveniet aliquid extrinsecus, quod prohibeat: nos tamen nec vincemur animo nec turpiter his rebus superabimur, quae non sunt in nostra potestate*. [...].

everything ‘internal’ is *in nostra potestate*, but as becomes clear in relation to the passions, this is not the case.⁵⁰

In the *De ira*, Seneca, in discussing the various stages of development of the passions, states that:

there are certain things which at the start depend on us, but later hurry us away by their force and leave us no retreat.⁵¹

The context is that Seneca, having discussed what anger (*ira*) is, whether it belongs to any other creature than Man, how it differs from irascibility and what its different expressions are, argues that it is not in accordance with nature, i.e. the nature of Man, and moreover that it is not even expedient.⁵² The first argument Seneca uses, as in the quote above, seeks to show that there is no such thing as a moderate or sound use of passions, and that the only alternatives are (i) not letting anger into the soul in the first place, or (ii) letting it in and thus being overcome by it, and consequently ‘[t]he best course is to reject at once the first incitement to anger’.⁵³ The argument relies on his version of the Stoic idea of passions as categorized into different stages.⁵⁴ The reason, why he thinks it best to avoid anger even in its earliest state is that this does *depend on us*, while avoiding it later on does not. Now, what is the subject on which the things first depend and then do not depend? Generally in the *De ira*, Seneca uses the opposition *ratio* and *adfectus*, but even within the relevant chapter he shifts between *ratio*, *mens*, and *animus*, as the counterpart of passion and as that which the latter enslaves unless the former acts according to Seneca’s advice. A further complicating fact is Seneca’s point that ‘these two do not dwell separate and distinct, but passion and reason are only the transformation of the mind toward the better or the worse’.⁵⁵ However, it is evident

⁵⁰ On the philosophical sources to the *De beneficiis*, cf. Préchac 1961, T.1, I–XLII.

⁵¹ Transl. Basore 1963 slightly modified. *De ira*, I.vii.4.7–8 Reynolds: [...] *Quarundam rerum initia in nostra potestate sunt, ulteriora nos vi sua rapiunt nec regressum relinquunt.* [...].

⁵² *De ira* I.vii.1. ff. Reynolds.

⁵³ Transl. Basore 1963. *De ira*, I.viii.1.16–17 Reynolds: [...] *Optimum est primum irritamentum irae protinus spernere.* [...].

⁵⁴ The Stoic theory of passions, i.e. in the Early Stoa, and the question of the extent of its development via the Middle Stoic Posidonius and in later Stoics such as Seneca has been treated in many places. For accessible accounts of the theory of passions in the old Stoa, cf. e.g. Inwood 1985, and for Seneca, cf. Inwood 1993.

⁵⁵ Transl. Basore 1963. *De ira*, I.viii.3.28–30 Reynolds: [...] *Non enim, [...] separatas ista sedes suas diductasque habent, sed affectus et ratio in melius peiusque mutatio animi est.* [...]. This passage is one of the clearest counter-examples of a traditional view that Seneca in the theory of the passions, due to allegedly Posidonian influences, expressed a sort of

that Seneca thinks that it is by means of our rational capacity that the things which at an early state depend on us actually do depend on us, e.g. it is by using our reason (*ratio*) that we can get rid of, or yield to, a beginning passion. This fits well together with his denial of passions to the other animals, based on their lack of *ratio*.⁵⁶ Still, we do not get from this passage any general account of what these ‘things’ which are first *in nostra potestate* and then not, really are, i.e. whether they comprise only passions or other things as well. Nor do we learn whether these things are the only things that are *in nostra potestate* etc.

In *De ira* book II, Seneca discusses whether anger arises from decision (*iudicium*) or impulse (*impetus*),⁵⁷ and defends the first option, i.e. the view that passion does not develop unless the soul approves.⁵⁸ The interesting point he makes here is that anger is distinct from inevitable things like shivering, etc. About these inevitable things he states that: ‘Because none of these things depend on us, no reasoning can keep them from happening’.⁵⁹ This implies that if reason can keep something from happening, that thing is *in nostra potestate*. But we can as well assume that this also tells us is that if something is *in nostra potestate*, reason (*ratio*) can hinder it, i.e. there seems to be no reason to assume that there are things *in nostra potestate* that reason cannot reach. Although this does not entail that what we have here is what we have called an exclusive use, such that only things that are approved/hindered by reason are *in nostra potestate*, it seems that they must be of such a kind that they can in principle be subjected to and approved or hindered by reason. This, however, in principle allows equally for taking Seneca to have an inclusive notion of *in nostra potestate*, on which it suffices that the principle of what is achieved is *in the agent*.

Thus, Seneca on the one hand clearly speaks of the things *in nostra potestate* as a class of things being *in nostra potestate* regardless of whether we decide or deliberate about them, and thus rather refers to their nature as the explication of their being *in nostra potestate*. However, there is a sense in which Seneca’s notion is exclusive, and it has to do with his

psychological dualism, dividing the soul into one rational part and one irrational part. Inwood 1993 convincingly argues against different variants of that view.

⁵⁶ *De ira*, I.iii.3.11–13 Reynolds: [...] *Sed dicendum est feras ira carere et omnia praeter hominem; nam cum sit inimica rationi, nusquam tamen nascitur nisi ubi rationi locus est.* [...].

⁵⁷ *De ira*, II.i.1.3ff. Reynolds.

⁵⁸ *De ira*, II.i.4.16f. Reynolds.

⁵⁹ *De ira*, II.2.1.12–13. Reynolds: [...] *quorum quia nihil in nostra potestate est, nulla quominus fiant ratio persuadet.* [...].

analysis of what is ‘internal’ or ‘external’. Namely, as to the question of what is *in* the agent, Seneca, as we will see below, excludes from what is *in nostra potestate* some things—the passions—that would seem to be inner in the inclusive sense, on the very ground that they in fact are ruled by changes in unmistakably external objects.⁶⁰ In this latter context, the underlying distinction Seneca uses is the one between things that depend on us and things that in some way are due to chance (*fortuna*).⁶¹ What we have, then, is the picture that the mere occurrence of impressions of e.g. harm is not *in nostra potestate*. Moreover, if we approve of such impressions, a passion follows, one which is not *in nostra potestate*.⁶² What actually is *in nostra potestate* is approving or not approving of that impression, and thus presumably the state of mind we are in directly following our not approving of such an impression is *in nostra potestate*.

In the *De brevitae vitae* 15, Seneca, in order to convince Paulinus to retire, argues for the benefits of the philosophical life. Regarding the content of that life the focus in this chapter lies on reading and studying philosophers, and thus becoming their follower and in that sense part of their ‘family’.⁶³ This is the idea reflected in the following remark:

we are wont to say that it did not depend on us to choose the parents who fell to our lot, that they have been given to men by chance; yet we may be the sons of whomsoever we will.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Inwood 1993, 175 argues in relation to this passage that the notion of *in nostra potestate* is used by Seneca in a narrow sense (i.e. narrower than the Early Stoics). This ‘narrow’ sense seems to be identical to one of the senses of ‘rational’ Inwood distinguishes, namely that only that which is susceptible to change through a conscious rational decision is rational (and thus is *in nostra potestate*). This interpretation of Seneca’s notion of *in nostra potestate* comes close to the view I argue for here. It seems, however, that Inwood by this intends to ascribe a version of what we have called the exclusive notion to Seneca, i.e. that (i) things are made *in nostra potestate* by being deliberated or decided upon. On the contrary, I take it that for Seneca the things *in nostra potestate* are a class of things by nature such that our reason cannot affect their occurrence. In this way he might be slightly closer to Epictetus (on whom see below), but though Seneca’s use might be *different* from Chrysippus’ notion of ἐπ’ ἡμῖν, I do not think it is *narrower*.

⁶¹ *De ira*, II.3.1.5–6. Reynolds: [...] *Nihil ex his quae animum fortuito impellunt adfectus vocari debet.* [...].

⁶² *De ira*, I.vii.4.7–8 Reynolds, quoted above.

⁶³ On previous uses of this metaphor in Seneca and other authors, cf. Grimal 1959, 60, n. 3f.

⁶⁴ Transl. Basore 1970, slightly modified. *De brevitae* 15.3.24f. Reynolds: [...] *Solemus dicere non fuisse in nostra potestate quos sortiremur parentes, forte nobis datos: nobis vero ad nostrum arbitrium nasci licet.* [...].

The point made here reflects the opposition also found in the *De ira* between what is *in nostra potestate*, and what is not but instead depends on chance (*fortuna*).⁶⁵ What parents (in the usual sense) we have is not *in nostra potestate*, but joining the ‘family’ of a philosopher by studying his writings, and thus leading a philosophic life, is *in nostra potestate*.⁶⁶

Given that the Stoic account of the passions and of how we can avoid them is highly relevant to the topic of *Consolations*, it is not surprising that we find the notion of *in nostra potestate* in Seneca’s *Consolations* as well.

In *Ad Marciam de consolatione* XIX, Seneca in discussing the remedy for the specific kind of grief caused by our *longing* for someone that we have lost, states:

What tortures us, therefore, is an opinion, and every evil is only as great as we have reckoned it to be. *In our hands* we have the remedy. Let us consider that the dead are merely absent and let us deceive ourselves; we have sent them on their way—nay, we have sent them ahead and shall soon follow. (italics mine)⁶⁷

The argument is based on the same conception of the passions as in the *De ira*. It is not *the fact per se* that triggers the passion, e.g. grief, but our *opinion*, or the way we *conceive* of it.⁶⁸ An addition here is that Seneca does not advise us to refrain from approving of a false impression about the facts, as in the *De ira* passage discussed above, but exhorts us to deceive ourselves. The remedy is then to conceive of the facts in a way that in one sense is obviously false.⁶⁹ What motivates this slight self-deception, though, is the underlying idea, explicit elsewhere, that an opinion producing a passion makes us live not in accordance with

⁶⁵ The idea that which parents we have is something given by chance (*fortuna* or *forte*) might, as in the case of Middle Platonism where it became a commonplace in the account of fate and that which depends on us, derive from the the description of the choice of lives in the myth of Er in *Rep.* X. Cf. below chapter 5.

⁶⁶ For an outline of the argument of the dialogue, i.e. the—from a Roman perspective—controversial idea that due to their different attitudes to time, the ‘public’ life of the *occupati* is worse than the ‘inner’ life of the *otiosi* cf. Grimal 1959, 5–13.

⁶⁷ Transl. Bashore 1970. *Ad Marc.* 19.1.8–12. Reynolds: [...] *opinio est ergo quae nos cruciat, et tanti quodque malum est quanti illud taxavimus. In nostra potestate remedium habemus: iudicemus illos abesse et nosmet ipsi fallamus; dimisimus illos, immo consecuturi praemisimus.* [...].

⁶⁸ For this point, see also *Ad Marc.* 7.1.29ff. For the philosophical points of the *Ad Marc.* cf. Favez 1928, XXVIII–XLVIII, who also points out some of the relevant contradictions and repetitions found in the text (p. L–LII).

⁶⁹ This remedy of deceiving oneself is picked up later on by Epictetus, cf. below.

nature.⁷⁰ Moreover, the stoic idea of the indifferents, i.e. that all things except virtue (which is the only good) and vice (which is the only evil) are indifferents, seems to be assumed, in this case implying that forming any opinion about whether the loss of someone dear is good or bad is by definition wrong, which motivates forming any other, instrumentally beneficial opinion about the fact or situation.

In the *Ad Helviam matrem de consolatione*, Seneca, having described some historical examples of the class of women among which he wishes to count his mother Helvia, goes on to spell out the one and only method of getting out of grief, i.e. by engaging in philosophical studies (*liberalia studia*). He begins by stating the point that:

I know well that this is a matter that does not depend on us, and that no emotion is submissive, least of all that which is born from sorrow; for it is wild and stubbornly resists every remedy.⁷¹

Exactly what the ‘matter’ (*res*) is that Seneca claims not to be *in nostra potestate* here is not clear. However, given what we find elsewhere, the point is most likely the one that when already suffering or undergoing a passion, avoiding its expressions is not *in nostra potestate*. This might seem odd given what precedes the remark in the quote, i.e. the exhortation to Helvia to follow the exemplified women ‘in your effort to restrain and suppress your sorrow’,⁷² which would seem to imply that the matter indeed was *in nostra potestate*. The most likely explanation for these seemingly contradictory remarks is to see the rest of the chapter, describing the senses in which the philosophical studies (*liberalia studia*) will make Helvia escape from the power of chance (*fortuna*), as further developing the view of what regarding the passions is *in nostra potestate* that we found in the *De ira*, though here the focus is rather on what is *in nostra potestate* when we are already in the grip of a passion. Thus, the point made here is that when in the grip of a passion such as grief for someone lost or taken away from us, it is indeed *in nostra potestate*, through philosophical studies, not only to permanently get rid of that

⁷⁰ *Ad Marc.* 19.1.8–12. Reynolds: [...] *Sed plus est quod opinio adicit quam quod natura imperavit.* [...].

⁷¹ Transl. Basore 1970, slightly modified. *Ad Helviam* 17.1.13–15 Reynolds: [...] *Scio rem non esse in nostra potestate nec ullum adfectum servire, minime vero eum qui ex dolore nascitur; ferox enim et adversus omne remedium contumax est.* [...].

⁷² Transl. Basore 1970. *Ad Helviam* 16.7.11–12 Reynolds: [...] *in coercenda comprimendaque aegritudine* [...].

specific passion by submitting it to reason,⁷³ but also to attain a state where the power of fortune (*fortuna*) cannot reach us any longer.⁷⁴

The occurrences of the notion in the *Ad Lucilium epistulae morales* are in general found in the same kind of context as in the *Dialogues* discussed above, i.e. within a discussion of the passions and of how they must be avoided to achieve happiness.⁷⁵

In *Ep.* 85, which on Lucilius' demand presents the Stoics' proofs for the doctrine that virtue suffices for happiness,⁷⁶ Seneca states that:

Can one doubt that the vices of the human mind, when they have become chronic and callous ('diseases' we call them), are beyond control, as, for example, greed, cruelty, and wantonness? Therefore the passions also are beyond control; for it is from the passions that we pass over to the vices. Again, if you grant any privileges to sadness, fear, desire, and all the other wrong impulses, they will cease to depend on us. *And why? Simply because the means of arousing them lie outside ourselves.* (my italics)⁷⁷

This remark is probably the closest Seneca ever comes towards giving a definition of what he thinks *in nostra potestate* means. Although it is not stated straightforwardly, we can conclude from the passage that what is *in nostra potestate* is that of which the cause is in some sense internal. Likewise, what is not *in nostra potestate* is that of which the cause producing it is external to us.

⁷³ *Ad Helviam* 17.2.23–24 Reynolds: [...] *at quisquis (sc. adfectus) rationi cessit, in perpetuum componitur.* [...].

⁷⁴ *Ad Helviam* 17.5.14–16 Reynolds: [...] *Haec quidem certissima praesidia sunt et quae sola te fortunae eripere possint.* [...]. That the possibility of fleeing from chance is indeed a reality to Seneca is also underlined by the statement about philosophical studies at *Ad Helviam* 17.3.31–32 Reynolds: [...] *Itaque illo te duco quo omnibus qui fortunam fugiunt confugiendum est, ad liberalia studia.* [...]. Seneca's focus on avoiding chance (*fortuna*) in this context, and of identifying what is not *in nostra potestate* with what happens through chance, pervades the whole treatise. However, he sometimes speaks equally of the 'cruel fate', in a manner that makes it most likely that he takes 'what happens through fate (*fatum*)' and 'what happens through chance (*fortuna*)' to be the same things.

⁷⁵ For an overview of the philosophical content of the *Epistulae*, cf. Mazzoli 1987, 1869–1877.

⁷⁶ For an outline of the arguments of *Ep.* 85, cf. the *Sommaire* in Préchac 1995, 125 ff.

⁷⁷ Transl. Gummere 1920, slightly modified. *Ep.* 85. 10–11 Préchac: [...] *Numquid dubium est, quin vitia mentis humanae inveterata et dura, quae morbos vocamus, immoderata sint, ut avaritia, ut crudelitas, ut inpotentia [impietas]? Ergo immoderati sunt et adfectus: ab his enim ad illa transitur. Deinde si das aliquid iuris tristitiae, timori, cupiditati, ceteris motibus pravis, non erunt in nostra potestate. Quare? quia extra nos sunt, quibus iritantur:* [...]. A more fortunate alternative to Gummere's 'means of arousing', which is slightly vague, is Préchac's 'les objets qui provoquent...'. Thus, external variations such as new objects of desire, yields new—internal—desires, etc.

The consequences of this difference are spelled out a bit further ahead:

If the existence of the passions is not in our own control, neither is the extent of their power; for if you once permit them to get a start, they will increase along with their causes, and they will be of whatever extent they shall grow to be.⁷⁸

The point is quite clear: once you make the mistake of granting a passion into your soul you not only become unable to get rid of it at once, but it and thus the state of your soul, will change entirely according to changes in its external causes.⁷⁹

In *Ep.* 91, containing some reflections on the fire that destroyed Lyons, somewhat along the lines of the *Consolationes*, Seneca displays some common Stoic views: we must prepare our souls for everything since chance (*fortuna*)—in as swift as unpredictable ways—can destroy everything (4–17).⁸⁰ Equanimity then, is achieved by not granting the works of chance as evils, including death (18–21).⁸¹ The letter ends with the slightly puzzling statement:

⁷⁸ Transl. Gummere 1920. *Ep.* 85.12 Préchac & Noblot: [...] *Si in nostra potestate non est, an sint adfectus, ne illud quidem est, quanti sint: si ipsis permisistri incipere, cum causis suis crescent tantique erunt, quanti fient.* [...].

⁷⁹ The same use, although in a different context, is found in *Ep.* 86 written at Scipio Africanus' villa, in which, after opposing Scipio's modest habits with those of Seneca's contemporaries, he relates some local ideas on plants and trees, and states that if, as he has just heard, 'thick-stemmed' trees actually prefer well-water, then 'if we have this help, we have the rain in our power' (my transl.), *Ep.* 86.21 Préchac & Noblot: [...] *quae si prodest habemus pluuiam in nostra potestate.* [...]. Préchac & Noblot (*ad loc.*) reads the '*quae si prodest*' as meaning 'si c'est là le bon moyen', as if Seneca would be skeptical about this method, while Grummere, rightly I take it, understands Seneca as accepting the method and thus saying: 'if we have this help' (i.e. if we have the well-water) 'then we are our own rain-makers'.

⁸⁰ Richard & Richard (II, notes, 369) commenting on the letter talks of 'le destin'. Fate (*fatum*) however, does not dominate Seneca's discussion here. He instead sticks to the somewhat unstoic and quite fuzzy notion of chance (*fortuna*). The talk of 'the laws of life' and 'the law' at 91.15–16 is never given any systematic role in the account, nor does the occasional substitution of chance (*fortuna*) by fate (*fatum*) at 91.15 lead to anything like an account of the old Stoic theory of fate. Instead, *fortuna*, *fatum* and *sors* all refer to individual fate one has to face, and the generality is simply that this in all cases comes down to the fact of being doomed to perish. The basic account behind this passage thus remains the same as found elsewhere in Seneca of a simple opposition between the power of *fortuna*, and of what escapes it, i.e. what is in *nostra potestate*.

⁸¹ For a short outline of the argument of the *Ep.* 91, cf. the *Sommaire* in Préchac & Noblot 1962, 43 ff.

Meanwhile, it is foolhardy to condemn that of which you are ignorant. This one thing, however, you do know—that death is helpful to many, that it sets many free from tortures, want, ailments, sufferings, and weariness. We do not depend on anything (else) when once our death depends on us! Farewell.⁸²

I take it that the point here is entirely metaphorical, i.e. Seneca simply adds up some reasons not to think of death as something evil, and one of them is that for those who are in bad states and/or in someone else's power, death, putting an end to their suffering, comes as a salvation, since in death '[w]e do not depend on anything'. The expression 'when once death depends on us' is then a metaphorical expression for 'death' or 'when we are dead'.

To conclude, then, Seneca makes systematic use of the distinction between what is *in nostra potestate* and what is not *in nostra potestate*. The latter things, i.e. those *not in nostra potestate*, are most generally characterized as what is in some sense external (to the soul) and thus as what instead depends on chance (*fortuna*). That which is *in nostra potestate*, then, would seem to be everything that is internal (to the soul). This is not the whole story, though. There are restrictions as to which internal things that are in some sense *in nostra potestate*; first of all Seneca repeatedly points out that *the appearances*, e.g. whether some misfortune seems bad to us or not, is not *in nostra potestate*. On the other hand, *to approve or to not approve* of such impressions using our reason (*ratio*) is *in nostra potestate*. Secondly, if we approve of such an impression, i.e. of something in truth indifferent as being good or bad, a state of passion follows. Given that the passion is in this sense an opinion about something external and changing, our soul thus becomes dependent on external changes in these relevant objects.⁸³ At this stage, not yielding to the impressions related to the passion, and not being aroused is no

⁸² Transl. Grummere, slightly modified. *Ep.* 91.21 Préchac & Noblot: [...] *interim temeritas est damnare quod nescias. At illud scis quam multis utilis sit, quam multos liberet tormentis, egestate, querellis, suppliciis, taedio. Non sumus in ullius potestate cum mors in nostra potestate sit. VALE.* [...]. Richard & Richard (II, *ad loc.*) has 'nous ne sommes au pouvoir de personne, puisque la mort est en notre pouvoir. Adieu', which presumably taking the 'cum' as causal or explicative, would seem to refer to suicide as 'en notre pouvoir'. Exactly how this fits with their note (p. 369) that 'la mort...est la seule chose dont nous ne soyons pas maîtres', is less than evident. Préchac & Noblot instead opt for the same reading as Grummere, 'Nous ne sommes au pouvoir de personne, du moment que la mort est en notre pouvoir.'

⁸³ Cf. *Ep.* 85.11 Préchac: [...] *Deinde si das aliquid iuris tristitiae, timori, cupiditati, ceteris motibus pravis, non erunt in nostra potestate. Quaere? quia extra nos sunt, quibus iritantur: [...].*

longer *in nostra potestate*. On the other hand, what is *in nostra potestate* at this point is to opt for the philosophical life or philosophical studies. It is Seneca's view that only by thus training our reason (*ratio*) can we get rid of the faulty passions and thus escape the power of chance (*fortuna*). It is evident, then, that in Seneca the discussion of that which depends on us (what is *in nostra potestate*) is found within the discussion of the passions. Moreover, these discussions deal both with the more ethical issue of what constitutes happiness and under what conditions happiness may be achieved, as well as with the more physical issue of the works and scope of chance (*fortuna*). Seneca, in his notion of *in nostra potestate*, notably links these two fields, in that avoiding or even escaping the works of chance (*fortuna*) by directing oneself towards that which is *in nostra potestate* is what his view of achieving happiness amounts to.

4.3. Musonius' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν

The evidence of the philosophy of the Stoic Musonius Rufus (AD c. 30–c. 100), the teacher of Epictetus, consists of different kinds of texts, the main source of which is Stobaeus. The extant texts consist of, on the one hand, a set of rather complete discourses, or diatribes, collected by a pupil named Lucius in a manner similar to Arrian's collection of Epictetus' *Discourses*,⁸⁴ and on the other, of fragments from different sources. Musonius' only reported use of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν occurs in one of these smaller fragments.⁸⁵ The fragment is one of those preserved by Stobaeus, and falls within a group carrying the heading *Rufus' from the remarks of Epictetus on Friendship* (Ρούφου ἐκ τῶν Ἐπικτήτου Περὶ φιλίας).⁸⁶ These are, however, not included in Arrian's edition of Epictetus' *Discourses*, and have thus been taken to be passages quoted by Epictetus somewhere else, possibly from a written treatise by Musonius.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Thus, e.g. the translation and commentary of Festugière 1978 only includes these diatribes, and leaves out the fragments, while Jagu 1979, like Lutz 1947 includes the fragments as well.

⁸⁵ *Fr.* 38 Hense. (=Stob. *Ecl.* II.8.30). Cf. Oldfather 1928, 444–445.

⁸⁶ On the sources of the fragments and on problems with editing them, cf. Lutz 1947.

⁸⁷ Cf. Lutz 1947, 9; 9, n. 22. Oldfather 1928, 445, n. 1, defends this view that 'Epictetus had quoted with approval a fairly long passage from his revered teacher Musonius Rufus'. As for the *fr.* 38, I take it that the use of ξύμπασα (never used in Epictetus) for σύμπασα and the occurrence of the notion of εὐθυμία as part of the definition of the state of correct χρεῖσις τῶν φαντασιῶν (found in 2 verb-forms, but never

In the fragment, where the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν occurs, Musonius states in a way similar to what we will find in Epictetus that God has put some things ἐφ' ἡμῖν, others not ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Now, to the question as to which things in fact are ἐφ' ἡμῖν, we get the response from Musonius that:

That which depends on us is the finest and most excellent (thing), through which indeed He is himself well-doing—the use of the impressions.⁸⁸

What follows is an explanation not of why that which depends on us, i.e. the use of the impressions 'is the finest and most excellent thing', but of the qualities of the state, namely complete virtue, that can be achieved by it:⁸⁹

for this [the use of the impressions], when it happens in the right way, is freedom, well-flowing, contentment, tranquillity,⁹⁰ and this is both justice, and law, and prudence and general virtue.⁹¹

as noun in Epict.), speak in favour of the quote-hypothesis. Cf. also Laurenti 1989, 2105–2113.

⁸⁸ *Fr.* 38.1–3. Hense. [...] ἐφ' ἡμῖν μὲν τὸ κάλλιστον καὶ σπουδαιότατον, ᾧ δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς εὐδαίμων ἐστί, τὴν χρῆσιν τῶν φαντασιῶν [...].

⁸⁹ I.e. as implied by the γάρ at *Fr.* 38.3. Hense.

⁹⁰ Lutz 1947, 137 translates the 'ἐλευθερία ἐστίν, εὐροια, εὐθυμία, εὐστάθεια' as 'means serenity, cheerfulness, constancy'. The latter two words fit with the last two Greek words, but it is not obvious if 'serenity' is to render ἐλευθερία or εὐροια, or both, or neither.

⁹¹ *Fr.* 38.3–5. Hense: [...] τοῦτο γάρ ὁρθῶς γιγνόμενον ἐλευθερία ἐστίν, εὐροια, εὐθυμία, εὐστάθεια, τοῦτο δὲ καὶ δίκη ἐστί καὶ νόμος καὶ σωφροσύνη καὶ ξύμπασα ἀρετή. [...]. Notably, εὐροια is well-attested early Stoic terminology as part of the definition of εὐδαιμονία, namely as εὐροια βίου. Cf. *SVF* I.84 (=Stob. *Ecl.* II.77, 20 W) [for Zeno]; Sext. *Adv. Math.* XI.30 [for Zeno, Cleanthes & Chrysippus]; *SVF* I.554 (=Stob. *Ecl.* II.7.6c, 77, 21 W. [for Cleanthes, Chrysippus & 'All those following them']); *SVF* III.4 (=DL *Vit.* VII.87 [for Chrysippus]). εὐστάθεια is attested early Stoic terminology for the state of stability or tranquility of the desires, impulses, i.e. ἡ τῶν ὁρμῶν εὐστάθεια. Cf. *SVF* III.264 (=Stob. *Ecl.* II.60, 9 W). The phrase ξύμπασα ἀρετή is quite rare, found in Plato *Lach.* 199e4 (i.e. in the form σύμπασα ἀρετή) signifying (the specific virtue of ἀνδρεία appearing to be) 'virtue as a whole' as opposed to being a part of virtue. The form with ξυμ-, (att. for συμ-) is only found in later sources, e.g. Dio Chrys. *Or.* 77/78.21.5. Van Geytenbeek 1963, 50 also points to some of the occurrences in Epictetus of εὐστάθεια (and εὐσταθεῖν—Van Geytenbeek instead writes εἰσταθεῖν which I assume is a misprint) and εὐροια (and εὐροεῖν), and from the presence of these and the expressions ἐφ' ἡμῖν and χρῆσις τῶν φαντασιῶν draws the conclusion that 'it is [...] possible that only the contents of fr. XXXVIII are typical for Musonius, but that Epictetus expressed Musonius's opinion "sui verbi".' However, this seems odd given that Van Geytenbeek also acknowledges that most of the terminology here goes back to the Early Stoics. The suggestion would thus imply that Musonius constitutes an

The significant point here is the addition ‘when it happens in the right way’ (ὁρθῶς γινόμενον). This implies an important distinction between what is ἐφ’ ἡμῖν on the one hand, and complete virtue including freedom (ἐλευθερία) on the other hand. Namely, while the use of the impressions is ἐφ’ ἡμῖν in an equal manner for all agents, the state of freedom (ἐλευθερία) is only achieved by those who master using the impressions in the right way (ὁρθῶς).

A bit further ahead, Musonius draws the following conclusion from the above statement, namely that:

Thus, it is necessary that we become of the same opinion as God and divide the things in the following way: seeking in every way after the things which depend on us, while leaving what does not depend on us to the cosmic order and, whether it demands our children or our country or our body or anything at all, be glad to give [them] up.⁹²

Thus the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν in play here indicates that Musonius entirely identified the use of impressions with what is ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, but also strongly linked the *correct use* of the impressions with the state of freedom (ἐλευθερία) as one of the defining aspects of the state of εὐδαιμονία. This link evidently has many similarities with what we found in Seneca above. In Seneca however, it was explicitly spelled out how opting for the philosophical life—which is well-being, or, the happy life—depended on us even when we are in the faulty state of passion. By contrast, in Musonius even though there is a general tendency of exhortation towards opting for such a god-like life of well-being, it is not entirely clear in what way the striving to adapt oneself, i.e. to adapt one’s use of the impressions, as such, should be seen as depending on oneself as well. Notably, it is not clear whether it would then depend on us in the same sense as what we do when we have attained that perfect state depends on us.⁹³

exception within a tradition from the Early Stoics to Epictetus (and beyond), which seems unlikely to be the case. Jagu (1979, 100, n. 214) rather takes the resemblance in terminology to prove the influence of Musonius on Epictetus.

⁹² Fr. 38.6–10. Hense: [...] οὐκοῦν καὶ ἡμᾶς συμψηφους χορὴ τῷ θεῷ γενέσθαι καὶ ταύτη διελόντας τὰ πράγματα τῶν μὲν ἐφ’ ἡμῖν πάντα τρόπον ἀντιποιεῖσθαι, τὰ δὲ μὴ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν ἐπιτρέψαι τῷ κόσμῳ καί, εἴτε τῶν παιδῶν δέοιτο εἴτε τῆς πατρίδος εἴτε τοῦ σώματος εἴτε ὅτουοῦν, ἀσμένους παραχωρεῖν. [...].

⁹³ Laurenti 1989, 2113–2120, 2129–2136 gives a detailed analysis of Musonius’ conception of this adaptation and training but does not comment on its relation to the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, perhaps due to his aim of underlining the differences between Epictetus and Musonius, notably as to the absence in Musonius of Epictetus’ tendency of reducing everything into ‘a problem of freedom (libertà)’ (p. 2144). On the Musonian

4.4. *Epictetus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν*

Epictetus is perhaps the first philosopher for whom we are justified to say that the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is absolutely central to his philosophical doctrine as we know it.⁹⁴ He uses it through all four books of the *Discourses* and in the *Encheiridion*. The central role of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν here stems from the fact that what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν coincides with the objects of ethics, towards which alone he exhorts us to focus all our efforts and thus distinguish what is in accordance with nature and what is not, and then to only seek the former and only avoid the latter, in order to attain a good life, i.e. well-being. As for the particular features of his notion, the plural form is significant. Aristotle already in the *EN* used the plural form and talked in terms of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, i.e. the things which depend on us.⁹⁵ This feature is far more developed in Epictetus. One can distinguish, on the one hand, the passages where the plural form is simply used, i.e. referring to a presupposed list of 'things which depend on us', which is not made explicit, and on the other those where Epictetus actually tells us which things are (and which things are not) on that list. The great number of instances of the former type perfectly illustrates how central the notion is to Epictetus' philosophy.⁹⁶ However, what we will focus on here is primarily the second type of passages, i.e. those where something specific is said about which things are ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Thus Epictetus states that: 'only the correct use of impressions depends to us'.⁹⁷ Moreover, he repeatedly states that 'choice and all the works of choice depend on us',⁹⁸ while 'the body, the parts of the body, possessions, parents, brothers, children, country and generally things with which we associate' do not depend on us.⁹⁹

notions of ἀσκησις of the soul and ἀσκησις of the body (as different from Epictetus' views), cf. Hershbell 1989, 2158 and Geytenbeek 1962, 42ff.

⁹⁴ All references to Epictetus refer to the text of Schenkl 1916, 1965.

⁹⁵ Cf. section 3.1.3.

⁹⁶ Learning this distinction of 'the things which depend on us' and 'the things which do not depend on us' must be part of any education: *Diss.* I.22.10.1–2: [...] ὅτι τῶν ὄντων τὰ μὲν ἐστὶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν, τὰ δὲ οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν [...].

⁹⁷ *Diss.* I.1.7.2–3: [...] μόνον ἐφ' ἡμῖν [...] τὴν χρῆσιν τὴν ὀρθὴν ταῖς φαντασίαις [...]; A point repeated further on: *Diss.* II.19.32.2–4 [...] οὕτε [...] ἐστὶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν [...] οὕτε ἄλλο τι ἁπλῶς πλὴν ὀρθῇ χρῆσις φαντασιῶν. [...].

⁹⁸ *Diss.* I.22.10.2–3: [...] ἐφ' ἡμῖν μὲν προαίρεσις καὶ πάντα τὰ προαιρετικά ἔργα [...]. That all acts of choice are up to us is repeated many times; *Diss.* II.13.10.2–3 [...] τὰ προαιρετικά δὲ πάντα ἐφ' ἡμῖν [...].

⁹⁹ *Diss.* I.22.10.3–11.1: [...] οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν δὲ τὸ σῶμα, τὰ μέρη τοῦ σώματος, κήσεις, γονεῖς, ἀδελφοί, τέκνα, πατρίς, ἁπλῶς οἱ κοινωνοί. [...]. The same list is given in *Diss.*

The works of choice are then found to encompass the goods of the soul, i.e. the pleasure of the soul.¹⁰⁰ Later on in *Diss.* IV, speaking of *choice* is replaced by the terminology of *assent* (ἡ συγκατάθεσις),¹⁰¹ and *assenting* (τὸ συγκαταθέσθαι),¹⁰² and speaking of *the works of choice* is replaced by speaking of *the region of assent* (ἐν μὲν τῷ συγκαταθετικῷ τόπῳ).¹⁰³ In the same paragraph Epictetus adds *desiring* (τὸ ὀρμηῆσαι)¹⁰⁴ and *not desiring* (τὸ ἀφορμηῆσαι)¹⁰⁵ to the list of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Moreover, at the beginning of the *Encheiridion*, Epictetus gives a list of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν that is rather more detailed: 'conception, impulse, desire, aversion, and in a word everything that is our own doing'.¹⁰⁶ Taken together, these depictions of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν implies that the work or activities of choice, given that 'choice' for Epictetus seems to be synonymous with 'assent', is exactly the use of impressions.¹⁰⁷

Having thus established *in relation to what things* Epictetus applied the notion, it remains to see what is it about the things that are ἐφ' ἡμῖν

IV.1.66.2–67.7: [...] Τὸ σῶμα ὅταν θέλῃς ὁλόκληρον εἶναι, ἐπὶ σοὶ ἐστὶν ἢ οὐ; Οὐκ ἐπ' ἐμοί. Ὅταν δ' ὑγαίνεῖν; Οὐδὲ τοῦτο. Ὅταν δὲ καλὸν εἶναι; Οὐδὲ τοῦτο. Ζῆν δὲ καὶ ἀποθανεῖν; Οὐδὲ τοῦτο. Οὐκοῦν τὸ μὲν σῶμα ἀλλότριον, ὑπεύθυνον παντὸς τοῦ ἰσχυροτέρου. Ἔστω. Τὸν ἀγρὸν δ' ἐπὶ σοὶ ἐστὶν ἔχειν, ὅταν θέλῃς καὶ ἐφ' ὅσον θέλεις καὶ οἷον θέλεις; Οὐ. Τὰ δὲ δουλάρια; Οὐ. Τὰ δ' ἱμάτια; Οὐ. Τὸ δὲ οἰκίδιον; Οὐ. Τοὺς δ' ἱπποὺς; Τοῦτων μὲν οὐδέν. Ἄν δὲ τὰ τέκνα σου ζῆν θέλῃς ἐξ ἅπαντος ἢ τὴν γυναῖκα ἢ τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἢ τοὺς φίλους, ἐπὶ σοὶ ἐστὶν; Οὐδὲ ταῦτα. [...]; also *Diss.* IV.1.130.1–2: [...] οὐκοῦν τὸ σῶμα ἀλλότριον, τὰ μέρη αὐτοῦ ἀλλότρια, ἢ κτήσις ἀλλοτριὰ [...]; and *Ench.* 1.1.3–4: [...] οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν δὲ τὸ σῶμα, ἢ κτήσις, δόξαι, ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐνὶ λόγῳ ὅσα οὐχ ἡμέτερα ἔργα [...]. A slight exception from this two-list view seems to be the recognition of the fact that 'if once a child is born, it is no longer in our power not to love it or care for it', *Diss.* I.23.5.1–6.1: [...] ἂν ἅπαξ γένηται παιδίον, οὐκέτι ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἐστι μὴ στέργειν μηδὲ φροντίζειν ἐπ' αὐτῷ. [...]. Although put as something Epicurus 'knows', it is of course in principle possible that Epictetus does not endorse this view.

¹⁰⁰ *Diss.* III.7.5.1–6.1: [...] Ψυχῆς δὲ ἀγαθὰ πότερον προαιρετικά ἐστὶν ἢ ἀπροαίρετα; Προαιρετικά. Προαιρετικὸν οὖν ἐστὶν ἡ ἡδονὴ ἢ ψυχικὴ; Ἔφη. [...].

¹⁰¹ *Diss.* IV.1.72.3.

¹⁰² *Diss.* IV.1.69.2.

¹⁰³ *Diss.* IV.1.69.2–3.

¹⁰⁴ *Diss.* IV.1.70.1ff.

¹⁰⁵ *Diss.* IV.1.71.3–72.1.

¹⁰⁶ *Ench.* 1.1.2–3: [...] ἐφ' ἡμῖν μὲν ὑπόληψις, ὀρμή, ὄρεξις, ἔκκλισις καὶ ἐνὶ λόγῳ ὅσα ἡμέτερα ἔργα [...].

¹⁰⁷ There are two ways of reading the addition of 'correct' to the expression 'the use of impressions': either, (i) it implies that *both* the correct use and the incorrect use of impressions depend on us, but that the most important thing for Epictetus' audience, is that the correct use is. Or, (ii) the point is the one we found in Seneca, that the correct use of the impressions leads to a state, which depends on us, whereas the incorrect use of impressions leads to a state (of passion) which does not depend on us. All things taken into concern (i) seems most likely to be the case.

that make them ἐφ' ἡμῖν? A first hint is given by the passages where he simply rephrases the distinction between 'that which depends on us' and 'that which does not depend on us', such as the following:

And what else have you been studying, from the very outset, but how to discriminate between what is your own and what is not your own, what depends on you and what does not depend on you, what can be hindered and what cannot be hindered?¹⁰⁸

What we get from the above passage is simply the information that Epictetus identifies what 'depends on us' with 'what is properly ours', and with 'what *cannot* be hindered'. The latter trait is more interesting, in that it actually forms a condition for something being ἐφ' ἡμῖν, namely that only things that cannot be hindered are ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

Thus, if Epictetus is taken to be consistent in his understanding of the notion, the following things are such that they cannot be hindered by anything external to us: 'the correct use of impressions',¹⁰⁹ 'choice and all the works of choice',¹¹⁰ the latter of which include 'the goods of the soul i.e. the pleasure of the soul',¹¹¹ what is 'in the region of assent' (ἐν μὲν τῷ συγκαταθετικῷ τόπῳ),¹¹² 'assenting' (τὸ συγκαταθέσθαι),¹¹³ and 'assent' (ἡ συγκατάθεσις),¹¹⁴ desiring (τὸ ὀρμῆσαι),¹¹⁵ and not desiring (τὸ ἀφορμῆσαι);¹¹⁶ and conception, impulse, desire, aversion, and in a word everything that is our own doing (ἐφ' ἡμῖν μὲν ὑπόληψις, ὀρμή, ὀρεξις, ἔκκλισις καὶ ἐνὶ λόγῳ ὅσα ἡμέτερα ἔργα).¹¹⁷ It is also enlightening to point out that the opposite list, i.e. of 'things that do not depend on us', depicts things for which our efforts and concerns may well on some specific occasion be unhindered, but can still *in principle* be hindered, like anything relating to 'the body, the parts of the body, possessions, parents, brothers, children, country and generally things with which we associate'.¹¹⁸

¹⁰⁸ *Diss.* IV.1.83.2–4: [...] καὶ τί ἄλλο ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐμελέτας ἢ διακρίνειν τὰ σὰ καὶ οὐ σὰ, τὰ ἐπὶ σοὶ καὶ οὐκ ἐπὶ σοί, τὰ κωλύτα καὶ ἀκώλυτα; [...].

¹⁰⁹ *Diss.* I.1.7.2–3; II.19.32.2–4.

¹¹⁰ *Diss.* I.22.10.2–3; II.13.10.2–3.

¹¹¹ *Diss.* III.7.5.1–6.1.

¹¹² *Diss.* IV.1.69.2–3.

¹¹³ *Diss.* IV.1.69.2.

¹¹⁴ *Diss.* IV.1.72.3.

¹¹⁵ *Diss.* IV.1.70.1ff.

¹¹⁶ *Diss.* IV.1.71.3–72.1.

¹¹⁷ *Ench.* I.1.2–3.

¹¹⁸ *Diss.* I.22.10.3–11.1: [...] οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν δὲ τὸ σῶμα, τὰ μέρη τοῦ σώματος, κτήσεις, γονεῖς, ἀδελφοί, τέκνα, πατρίς, ἀπλῶς οἱ κοινωνοί [...]. Cf. the note above.

Epictetus spells out in somewhat further detail what the distinction is about by saying that the things that do not depend on us are such that it does not depend on us whether we have them or not, nor in what quality we have them, nor under which conditions we have them.¹¹⁹ This point I also take to imply that the opposite list, i.e. of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, consists of things that are such that it *is* ἐφ' ἡμῶν whether we have them or not, in what quality we have them, and under which conditions we have them. Hence, the notion of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν depicts a class of things that—from all aspects—*always* depend on us, in a way that does not vary between persons or situations, but depend on us *qua* human beings. The last point is much emphasized by Epictetus, though it is rather difficult to know to what extent the language he uses to make this point is to be taken metaphorically or literally. He repeatedly speaks of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν as *created* or *made* such by the gods,¹²⁰ including Zeus, whom Epictetus has saying that what the gods actually have given us is a part of themselves, i.e. 'the faculty of choice and refusal, of desire and aversion, or, in a word, the faculty which makes use of external impressions'.¹²¹ In the same context, Epictetus indicates that, even though Zeus and the gods plausibly had the wish to make more than this ἐφ' ἡμῶν, they simply could not, the reason being that our earthly conditions, both the fact that we are in this kind of body and that we have the kind of associates we have (i.e. earthly things), made this impossible.¹²² A point that is related to but goes beyond the issue of the constraint imposed on the gods here is that God made τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν impossible even for himself to hinder.¹²³ The same point is made in terms of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν *being by (their) nature* unrestrained, and

¹¹⁹ *Diss.* IV.1.129.3–130.1: [...] ἂ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐφ' ἡμῶν οὐτ' ἔχειν οὐτε μὴ ἔχειν οὐτε ποιεῖν ἢ πῶς ἔχοντα [...].

¹²⁰ *Diss.* I.1.7.2–3: [...] οἱ θεοὶ μόνον ἐφ' ἡμῶν ἐποίησαν, τὴν χρῆσιν τὴν ὀρθὴν ταῖς φαντασίαις, [...].

¹²¹ *Diss.* I.1.12.2–5: [...] ἐδώκαμέν σοι μέρος τι ἡμέτερον, τὴν δύναμιν ταύτην τὴν ὀρηκτικὴν τε καὶ ἀφορητικὴν καὶ ὀρεκτικὴν τε καὶ ἐκκλητικὴν καὶ ἀπλῶς τὴν χρηστικὴν ταῖς φαντασίαις, [...].

¹²² *Diss.* I.1.8.1–9.3: [...] ἐγὼ μὲν δοκῶ ὅτι, εἰ ἡδύναντο, κάκεινα ἂν ἡμῶν ἐπέτρεψαν ἄλλὰ πάντως οὐκ ἡδύναντο. ἐπὶ γῆς γάρ ὄντας καὶ σώματι συνδεδεμένους τοιούτῳ καὶ κοινωνοῖς τοιούτοις πῶς οἶόν τ' ἦν εἰς ταῦτα ὑπὸ τῶν ἐκτὸς μὴ ἐμποδίζεσθαι; [...]. Cf. also the spelling out of our embodiment as being in fetters: *Diss.* I.9.11.3–6 [...] ὅτι δεσμά τινα ταῦτα προσηρτήμεθα τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν κτῆσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ ὅσα τούτων ἕνεκα ἀναγκαῖα ἡμῶν γίνεται εἰς οἰκονομίαν καὶ ἀναστροφὴν τὴν ἐν τῷ βίῳ, [...].

¹²³ *Diss.* I.6.40.4–41.1: [...] ἀκώλυτον τοῦτο ἔδωκεν, ἀνανάγκαστον, ἀπαράποδιστον, ὅλον αὐτὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν ἐποίησεν οὐδ' αὐτῷ τινα πρὸς τοῦτο ἰσχὺν ἀπολιπών, ὥστε κωλύσαι ἢ ἐμποδίσαι. Cf. *Diss.* I.1.23.3–24.1: τὴν προαίρεσιν δὲ οὐδ' ὁ Ζεὺς νικῆσαι δύναται. [...].

unhindered,¹²⁴ and vice versa for τὰ οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The connection between these two stories about why τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν are ἐφ' ἡμῖν here is that God, or the gods, are simply responsible for the *nature* of things, including those depending on us and those that do not. Though having said that the earthy conditions constrained the gods in making human nature, Epictetus asserts that the nature of things *not* depending on us would still result from God's will.¹²⁵ Even though there is some ambiguity here as to whether God, or the gods, are responsible for the nature of *all* things in the sense of having created them as they are *tout court*, or whether they have rather created some natures, with already existing natures e.g. the nature of the human body, as constraints on that creation, the point Epictetus wants to make is quite clear. That some things depend on us *by nature, made so by the gods*, means that their depending on us does not depend on who you are, whether you are wise or not, in what situation you are, or whether we reason about them.

To conclude, then, it is striking that if we compare Epictetus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν with Chrysippus', we see that in Epictetus the notion has become internalized, in the sense that its application is now restricted to specific capacities of the human soul and their activities, thus excluding actions from what can be ἐφ' ἡμῖν. This reflects two significant differences, both pertaining to the overall objectives in the accounts of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν: in Chrysippus, we could still see a clear connection to the original context of Aristotle's *EN* III, i.e. the one of spelling out the criteria underlying our categorization of actions into voluntary, involuntary, etc, conceived as the basis for our ordinary praxis of praise and blame as well as of our legal praxis. In Epictetus, there seems to be a complete lack of this concern with actions; and actions, being dependent on the body, are in fact entirely excluded from what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Moreover, Chrysippus' account aimed at showing the compatibility of one of his doctrines, the doctrine of fate, with a common notion of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν. In Epictetus, what is at stake is not whether any of

¹²⁴ *Diss.* II.19.32.4–33.1: [...] τοῦτο ἀκόλутον φύσει μόνον, τοῦτο ἀνεμπόδιον [...]. Cf. also *Diss.* III.22.41.1–4: [...] πῶς οὖν ἔτι ἀνεμπόδιον εἶναι τι δύναται τῶν τοῦ σώματος; πῶς δὲ μέγα ἢ ἀξιόλογον τὸ φύσει νεκρόν, ἢ γῆ, ὁ πηλός; [...]; *Ench.* 1.2.2–3: [...] τὰ μὲν ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἔστι φύσει ἐλεύθερα, ἀκόλута, ἀπαράποδια, τὰ δὲ οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἀσθενῆ, δοῦλα, κωλυτά, ἀλλότρια. [...]. Cf. also the remark at *Diss.* IV.10.19.1–20.1: [...] ἀλλ' ἂν τι τῶν ἀλλοτριῶν θέλῃς, τὰ σὰ ἀπώλετο. αὕτη τοῦ πράγματος ἡ φύσις [...].

¹²⁵ *Diss.* I.1.17.2–4: [...] δεῖ τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν βέλτιστα κατασκευάζειν, τοῖς δ' ἄλλοις χρῆσθαι ὥς πέφυκεν. πῶς οὖν πέφυκεν; ὥς ἂν ὁ θεὸς θέλῃ. [...].

his doctrines is compatible with what is commonly taken to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Rather, the issue is exclusively that of how to attain well-being. Thus, rather than being interested in accounting for a common notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, he appears to be arguing for a radically new one. It is significant that his new notion is restrictive to an extent that even goes beyond what we in relation to the Aristotelian uses called an *exclusive* notion, i.e. that took only *rational* actions to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Epictetus in fact excludes even such rational actions and restricts it to internal acts of the soul. It has been pointed out in the literature that in Epictetus the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν pops up within the subdivision of philosophy called *ethics*, whereas for Chrysippus, the notion entered the discussion within the subdivision called *physics*.¹²⁶ However, Aristotle obviously discussed the notion in his *Ethics*, and the subdivisions of *ethics* and *physics* within the Stoa are not separate compartments, the doctrines of which would have no impact on each other, as illustrated by the fact that Chrysippus developed his account of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν because of the (seemingly negative) ethical consequences of his physics. In the light of this it appears that pointing out this fact as an aspect of development from Chrysippus to Epictetus is not very informative. Rather, other features like the overall objective and the scope of application of the notion should be emphasized as the significant novelties in Epictetus.

4.5. Marcus Aurelius' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν

The emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (AD 121–180) wrote the so-called *Meditations* (Τὰ εἰς ἑαυτόν) during his emperorship (161–180).¹²⁷ The question as to what extent Marcus Aurelius is an orthodox stoic, i.e. his relation to Early Stoicism as well as to his predecessors within Roman Stoicism, is complex, and contains many aspects which we cannot deal with here.¹²⁸ It is, however, beyond all doubt the case that we in many aspects find in the *Meditations* the same points as we find in the fragments of Musonius and in the works of Epictetus. This is also the case with the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Thus we find in the *Meditations*

¹²⁶ Bobzien 1998a, 331f.

¹²⁷ On the dating of the *Meditations*, cf. Asmis 1989, 2231, n. 8 & Rutherford 1989, 45ff. All references to Marcus Aurelius refer to the ed. of Farquharson.

¹²⁸ On Marcus Aurelius' relation to the Stoa as whole, cf. Rutherford 1989, 21–26, 225–255 & *passim*; Asmis 1989; Gill 2003, 50; Long 2002, esp. 176–178 & 205, and Annas 1993, 160–179; 410, n. 85.

the feature of talking in terms of the *class* of the things which depend on us, τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν.¹²⁹ This feature also occurs in a variant, i.e. the more direct form 'the things which depend on *you*'.¹³⁰ Moreover, as with Epictetus, we find Marcus Aurelius identifying this class—τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν—with the things that are within our choice (προαίρεσις),¹³¹ or judgment (ὑπόληψις).¹³² In addition, as in Epictetus, we also find Marcus Aurelius listing the things which depend on us (τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν). These are then spelled out as the inner states, and the obtaining of them, of our rational soul, e.g. sincerity, dignity, endurance of toil, abstinence from pleasure, to not grumble at your lot, to be content with little, to be kind, independent, frugal, serious, and high-minded.¹³³ In a similar manner, the things which *do not* depend on us (τὰ οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν) are listed. These

¹²⁹ Cf. *Med.* VI.41.1.6: [...] ἐὰν δὲ μόνα τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακὰ κρίνωμεν, [...]; VIII.7.1.3–4: [...] τὰς ὁρέξεις δὲ καὶ τὰς ἐκκλίσεις τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν μόνων περιποιουμένη [...]; IX.40.1.9–10: [...] τίς δέ σοι εἶπεν ὅτι οὐχὶ καὶ εἰς τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν οἱ θεοὶ συλλαμβάνουσιν; [...]; XI.37.1.4: [...] ἐκκλίσει δὲ πρὸς μηδὲν τῶν οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν χρῆσθαι. (supposed by Haines *ad loc.* to be a quote from Epict. *Diss.* III.22.105 and III.24.88 and *Ench.* II.2, but only the last ref. seems quite appropriate).

¹³⁰ Cf. *Med.* V.5.1.2–3: [...] ἐκεῖνα [...] ἅπερ ὅλα ἐστὶν ἐπὶ σοὶ [...]; V.5.33.1.14–15: [...] ταῦτα [...] μῆτε σὰ ὄντα μῆτε ἐπὶ σοὶ [...]; IX.40.1.6–8: [...] ἀλλὰ ἴσως ἔρεῖς ὅτι ἐπ' ἐμοὶ αὐτὰ οἱ θεοὶ ἐποίησαν. εἴτα οὐ κρείσσον χρῆσθαι τοῖς ἐπὶ σοὶ μετ' ἐλευθερίας [...]; The reference to something as member of this class is also visible in VII.2.1.2–3: [...] φαντασίαι [...], ἃς διηνεκῶς ἀναζωπυρεῖν ἐπὶ σοὶ ἐστὶν [...]; VII.54.1.1: [...] Πανταχοῦ καὶ διηνεκῶς ἐπὶ σοὶ ἐστὶ [...] VIII.17.1.1: [...] Εἰ μὲν ἐπὶ σοὶ, τί αὐτὸ ποιεῖς [...]; VIII.47.1.2: [...] τοῦτο δὲ ἤδη ἐξαλείψαι ἐπὶ σοὶ ἐστὶν [...]; X.32.1.3: [...] πᾶν δὲ τοῦτο ἐπὶ σοὶ.

¹³¹ *Med.* VI.41.1.1–6: [...] Ὁ τι ἂν τῶν ἀπροαίρετων ὑποστήσῃ σαυτῷ ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακόν, [...] ἐὰν δὲ μόνα τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακὰ κρίνωμεν, [...]; VIII.56.1.1–6: [...] Τῷ ἐμῷ προαιρετικῷ τὸ τοῦ πλησίον προαιρετικὸν ἐπίσης ἀδιάφορόν ἐστιν, ὥς καὶ τὸ πνευμάτιον αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ σαρκίδιον. [...] ὅπερ οὐκ ἔδοξε τῷ θεῷ, ἵνα μὴ ἐπ' ἄλλῳ ἢ τὸ ἐμὲ ἀτυχεῖν. [...]. Given the usual way of reading ἐφ' ἑαυτῷ ἔχειν τὸ ἡγεμονικόν, i.e. 'Keep the ruling Reason in *thine own* power' (Haines), or 'keep the governing self in *its own* control' (Farquharson), one might come to think that for Marcus Aurelius τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν would not be a fixed class, etc. However, I think the passage presents a metaphorical use of the notion, i.e. if someone accept an impression without scrutinizing it first, thus letting something not ἐφ' ἡμῖν inside the ruling part of the soul that might in a sense be called letting the ruling part of the soul become not ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Moreover, this use may reflect the point in Seneca discussed earlier, that reason and passion, in one sense, are different states of the soul, rather than different parts of it.

¹³² *Med.* XII.22.1.1–2: [...] Ὅτι πάντα ὑπόληψις καὶ αὕτη ἐπὶ σοὶ. ἄρον οὖν ὅτε θέλεις τὴν ὑπόληψιν [...].

¹³³ *Med.* V.5.1.2–5: [...] ἐκεῖνα οὖν παρέχον, ἅπερ ὅλα ἐστὶν ἐπὶ σοὶ, τὸ ἀκίβδηλον, τὸ σεμνόν, τὸ φερέπονον, τὸ ἀφιλήδονον, τὸ ἀμεμψίμοιον, τὸ ὀλιγοδεές, τὸ εὐμενές, τὸ ἐλευθέρων, τὸ ἀπέρισσον, τὸ ἀφλύαρον, τὸ μεγαλείον. [...]. Lists of the same kind are found at *Med.* VII.54.1.1–4.

are, then, what is external and outside the reach of choice and reason (διάνοια),¹³⁴ such as everything bodily.¹³⁵

On the whole, then, Marcus Aurelius follows his predecessors in the Roman Stoa, in particular Epictetus, regarding the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Notably, just as in Epictetus, the condition for the application of the notion is clearly one of 'unhinderability', and this is what lies behind the fact that we in Marcus Aurelius as well as in Epictetus find everything external, e.g. involving the body on the list of what is not ἐφ' ἡμῖν.¹³⁶ To some extent the step of applying the notion to what seems to be virtues as such, thus explicitly making the point that virtues are ἐφ' ἡμῖν, could be seen as a point of development in relation to his predecessors.¹³⁷

4.6. Conclusions concerning Stoic notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν

In analyzing Chrysippus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, we saw that there are at least two kinds of things that are ἐφ' ἡμῖν, internal acts of assent and impulse and external actions following from them. Chrysippus' explanations, as we find them in the sources commenting specifically on his notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, of how some things (mainly actions but also assents) can be ἐφ' ἡμῖν, are based primarily on his specific account of causes and their fatedness as such. From this view, while all things happen according to fate, the kind of external causes relevant to human action, i.e. the 'auxiliary' causes, are such that they do not by themselves account for the actions we perform, but in explanation of our actions one also has to make reference to an additional causal factor, namely to the agent's nature, as expressed in his assent. Thus, Chrysippus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is one that seeks to identify the contribution made by agents to the causation of their actions. This feature vanishes in the Roman Stoa. The Roman Stoic Seneca made systematic use of the distinction between what is *in nostra potestate* and what is not *in nos-*

¹³⁴ VII.2.1.4–5: [...] τὰ ἔξω τῆς ἐμῆς διανοίας οὐδὲν ὅλως πρὸς τὴν ἐμὴν διάνοιαν [...].

¹³⁵ What has to do with the flesh and breath, *Med.* V.33.1.13–15: [...] ὅσα δὲ ἐντὸς ὄρων τοῦ κρεαδίου καὶ τοῦ πνευματίου, ταῦτα μεμνησθαι μήτε σὰ ὄντα μήτε ἐπὶ σοί [...].

¹³⁶ There might be other reasons for the quite common tendency of reading into Marcus Aurelius' version of stoicism, an 'almost Platonic contrast between the mere body and the all-important mind or rational soul', as in e.g. Annas 1992, 55. It seems, however, that as to the contexts where Marcus discusses the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, this contrast or dichotomy follows from the condition of 'unhinderability', and is in no way a feature distinguishing him from e.g. Epictetus.

¹³⁷ On the ethical significance of this matter, cf. Rutherford 1989, 203 f.

tra potestate and we have extensive information in his extant works on this matter. In the texts, the latter things, i.e. those not *in nostra potestate*, are most generally characterized as what is in some sense external (to the soul) and thus as what instead depends on chance (*fortuna*). This distinction is based on whether the causal factors determining something are internal or external to the soul. Seneca thus repeatedly points out that *the appearances*, e.g. whether some misfortune appears bad to us or not, are not *in nostra potestate*. On the other hand, *to approve or to not approve* of such impressions using our reason (*ratio*) is *in nostra potestate*. Secondly, if we approve of such an impression, i.e. of something in truth indifferent, as being good or bad, a state of passion follows. Given that the passion is in this sense an opinion about something external and changing, our soul thus becomes dependent on external changes in the relevant objects.¹³⁸ At this stage, not yielding to the impressions related to the passion and not being aroused is no longer *in nostra potestate*. On the other hand, what is *in nostra potestate* at this point is to opt for the philosophical life or philosophical studies. It is Seneca's view that only by thus training our reason (*ratio*) can we get rid of the faulty passions and thus escape the works of chance (*fortuna*). It is evident, then, that in Seneca the discussion of that which depends on us (what is *in nostra potestate*) is found within the discussion of the passions, linking the ethical issue of what constitutes happiness and under what conditions happiness may be achieved, with the more physical issue of the works and scope of chance (*fortuna*). In a similar manner, Musonius Rufus entirely identified the use of impressions with what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and like Seneca, he also strongly linked the *correct use* of the impressions with the state of freedom (ἐλευθερία) as one of the defining aspects of the state of well-being, εὐδαιμονία. The mentioned tendencies of the Roman Stoa become more evident in Epictetus. Comparing Epictetus' notion with Chrysippus', we see that in Epictetus the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν has become internalized, in the sense that its application is now restricted to specific capacities of the human soul and their activities, thus excluding actions. This move reflects two significant differences, both pertaining to the overall objectives in the accounts of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν: In Chrysippus, we could still see a clear connection to the original context of Aristotle's *EN* III, i.e. the one of spelling out the criteria underlying our categorization of actions into voluntary, involuntary etc,

¹³⁸ Cf. *Ep.* 85.11 Préchac: [...] *Deinde si das aliquid iuris tristitiae, timori, cupiditati, ceteris motibus pravis, non erunt in nostra potestate. Quaere? quia extra nos sunt, quibus iritantur*: [...].

conceived as the basis for our ordinary praxis of praise and blame as well as of our legal praxis. In Epictetus, there seems to be a complete lack of this concern with actions, and actions, being dependent on the body, are in fact excluded from what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Moreover, Chrysippus' account aimed at showing the compatibility of one of his doctrines, the doctrine of fate, with a common notion of what was ἐφ' ἡμῖν. In Seneca, Musonius, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius as well, what is at stake is not whether any of their doctrines are compatible with what is commonly taken to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Rather, the issue is exclusively that of how to attain well-being. It is significant that his new use is restrictive to an extent that even goes beyond what we in relation to the Aristotelian notion called *an exclusive notion*, i.e. that took only *rational* actions to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Epictetus in fact excludes even such rational actions, and restricts the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν to internal acts of the soul.

CHAPTER FIVE

MIDDLE PLATONISTS

5.1. *A brief overview of the sources*

The so-called Middle Platonists¹ not only discussed the by then well-established problem of accounting for fate in a way compatible with some common notion of that which depends on us, τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, but we moreover have sources of what seems to be a particular Middle-Platonist theory on the topic.² As in the case of the Hellenistic schools, the secondary literature related to the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Middle Platonism often suffers from the unfortunate smuggling in of the talk of 'free will' within discussions of sources containing no such thing. This tendency in the secondary literature, especially given that it is rarely spelled out what 'free will' would mean, makes it difficult to say what certain interpretations really amount to.³ As in other cases, we will in

¹ By 'Middle Platonism' I mean the Platonist Philosophers of roughly the first centuries AD, up to Plotinus. On Middle Platonism in general, cf. for a survey Dillon 1977; for a discussion of selected texts, Lilla 1992, although he leaves out, among other themes, that of 'il rapporto tra fato e libero arbitrio', Lilla 1992, 3. Cf. also the survey in Whittaker 1987, and for an extensive bibliography, Deitz 1987.

² On the sources of this doctrine, cf. Bobzien 1998b, 146–152, and below.

³ The talk of 'free will' and 'fate and free will' in the discussion of the Middle-Platonist notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is quite abundant in e.g. Dillon 1977, 44–45. He writes: 'For the Middle Platonists, however, the problem of free will and necessity, with which is intertwined God's providence (*pronoia*), could not be dismissed so easily, and they did not find much help in Plato or Aristotle, though they did make appeal to key passages of both, as we shall see. We cannot be sure what Antiochus' stance was, as the attribution of Cicero's *De fato* is uncertain, nor can we say anything about Eudorus' position. Philo gives us the first defence of the Platonist position, which asserts both freedom of the will and the existence of providence against Stoic *heimarmenē* with more vigour than logical force. Plutarch also touches on the theme repeatedly, though his most serious discussions of the subject have not survived. The document *On fate* surviving under his name is certainly not by him, but is of great interest, and I will deal with it in connexion with Apuleius. All in all the Middle Platonists, though producing many scholastic formulae on the subject, failed to solve the problem, and bequeathed it in all its complexity to Plotinus, who writes a magnificent, if inconclusive, treatise on the topic in *Enneads* III 2–3.'

what follows stick closely to the sources actually involving the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as such. We then get two kinds of sources, those ascribing the notion to a specific Middle Platonist, and those describing what we have reason to think is a Middle-Platonist notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν without ascribing it to any particular Middle Platonists.

As to the first kind of sources, they are surprisingly few. If we look at the early Eudorus of Alexandria (middle of 1st cent. BC),⁴ and Philo of Alexandria (born c. 20 BC),⁵ we see that only Philo can be ascribed a notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.⁶ Then, in the next half-century, Plutarch of Chaeronea (c. AD 45–125),⁷ uses it in several contexts.⁸ Among the three main tendencies of Middle Platonism of the 2nd century AD,⁹ i.e. (i) the so-called Athenian school, (ii) the school of Gaius, and (iii) the Neopythagoreans, this kind of philosopher-specific evidence is particularly rare.

First of all, then, in the so-called Athenian school of the 2nd century,¹⁰ we see that among Nicostratus,¹¹ Calvenus Taurus,¹² Atticus (suc-

⁴ Cf. Dillon 1977, 114–135. A part of Eudorus' commentary history of philosophy, dealing with Ethics, is summarized by Arius Didymus (ap. Stob. *Anth.* II.42.7ff. Wachsmuth), but does not deal with the issue of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

⁵ Cf. Dillon 1977, 139–183. Dillon 1977, 166, discussing Philo, claims under the heading *Free will and providence* that 'like any Platonist, he must resist Stoic determinism, and yet reconcile the doctrine of the freedom of the will with that of the providence of God. If he does not quite succeed in this, he is no worse off in that respect than any of the other Platonists with whom we shall be dealing', and then, says that 'a passage such as *Deus* 47–48, for instance, is a strong statement of the doctrine of Free Will.' The passage indeed states that man alone has a capacity of voluntary movement, and what derives from that is as far as might be independent of fate, but this is not associated with any capacity of 'will', nor does 'the will' figure in the passage.

⁶ Cf. *Mut.* 244.1; *Som.* 2.291.3; *Q. Gen.* 1.21.8. These passages are analyzed below.

⁷ On Plutarch, cf. Dillon 1977, 184–230.

⁸ In the *Vitae*, at *Cor* 32.6.3; *Arist* 6.5.4; *Agis* 43.7.4; in the *Moralia*, at *Consolatio ad Apollonium* 102.C.8; *De tranquillitate animi* 467.A.12 & 476.E.8; *Quaestiones convivales* 740.C.8 & 740.D.2; *De sollertia animalium* 964.C.9; *De Stoicorum repugnantibus* 1056.C.10 & 1056.D.6. Also, at *Fragmenta* 86.5 & 139.4. These passages are analyzed below.

⁹ As distinguished by Dillon 1977, 231.

¹⁰ Cf. Dillon 1977, 231–265. Dillon 1977, 265 actually—rightly, it seems—dismisses the tradition of speaking of a school here, questioning the existence of an Academy in a physical sense, as well as any real unity in doctrine.

¹¹ Cf. Dillon 1977, 233–236. Our only source of Nicostratus is Simplicius, *In Cat.*, where he represents those hostile to Aristotle. Dillon 1977, 236 discusses some indications of Nicostratus being Stoic rather than Peripatetic in Ethics.

¹² Taurus was at the peak of his activity c. AD 145, cf. Des Places 1977, 16 & 16, n. 5. Also, Dillon 1977, pp. 237–247.

cessor of Taurus),¹³ Harpocraton of Argos (pupil of Atticus),¹⁴ and Severus,¹⁵ none is ascribed a use of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in the sources.

Secondly, among those usually associated with the school of Gaius,¹⁶ i.e. Gaius (early 2nd cent. AD),¹⁷ Albinus (pupil of Gaius),¹⁸ and Apuleius of Madura,¹⁹ only Apuleius can be ascribed a notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν (i.e. of its Latin synonyms). In this context, it should be mentioned that we also find it in Galen.²⁰

Thirdly, among the group often named Neopythagoreans,²¹ Moderatus of Gades (middle of 1st cent. AD),²² Nicomachus of Gerasa (1st half of 2nd cent. AD),²³ Numenius of Apamea (2nd half of 2nd cent. AD),²⁴

¹³ Atticus was active during Marcus Aurelius (AD 161–180), cf. Des Places 1977, 7. Armstrong 1966, 40, n. 1, rightly calls him the 'chief representative of the anti-Aristotelian group among the Middle Platonists'. His hostility towards his contemporaries' tendency to reconcile Plato with Aristotle made him unpopular both with Ammonius the Peripatetic and later Neoplatonists, cf. Des Places 1977, 7–8. Though Atticus attacked the Aristotelian conceptions of virtue (*Fr.* 2 Des Places), of providence (*Fr.* 3 Des Places, with *Fr.* 8), and of the generation of the world (*Fr.* 4 Des Places, also in many shorter *Fr.*), we have no trace of him criticizing the Aristotelian account of voluntary action or even mentioning the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν. If Des Places 1977, 85, is right in saying that 'l'argumentation à propos de la Providence faisait sans doute partie d'un ensemble plus vaste, auquel se rattacherait le fragment 3 *bis.*', it is not unlikely that Atticus in that context might have touched upon the issue of reconciling fate and τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν as well, presumably criticizing an Aristotelian view, although the extant fragments do not indicate that Atticus saw any connection between the theory of providence and the theory of fate. Cf. also Dillon 1977, 247–258.

¹⁴ Cf. Dillon 1977, 258–262.

¹⁵ Cf. Dillon 1977, 262–264.

¹⁶ Cf. Dillon 1977, 266–340.

¹⁷ Cf. Dillon 1977, 266–267.

¹⁸ Regarding Albinus, the views as to whether he is to be identified with 'Alkinous', to which the *Didascalicus* is traditionally attributed, have varied. The present study takes the view of Whittaker 1990 of not identifying them, and taking Alkinous to be the author of the work. Dillon 1977, 267 ff. identified them but later, i.e. in Dillon 1993, took the Whittaker view.

¹⁹ Cf. Dillon 1977, 306–338.

²⁰ Galen uses the notion in various places but not evidently in a way related to Middle-Platonist uses, and will not be analyzed in any detail here.

²¹ For the Neopythagoreans in general, cf. Dillon 1977, 341–383.

²² Cf. Dillon 1977, 344–351.

²³ Cf. Dillon 1977, 352–361. Dillon 1977, 360 briefly discusses a passage from the beginning of book II of Nichomachus' *Theology of Arithmetic*, on providence and evil, where evil is found to be 'according to providence', but it does not make use of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν.

²⁴ On Numenius, cf. Dillon 1977, 361–379. Dodds 1960, 22 claimed that Plotinus in *Enn.* II.3 'rejects Numenius' astral determinism'. If Numenius actually were the target of Plotinus, i.e. if Numenius defended the actual view under attack in *Enn.* II.3, it is likely that he also had a view about how to reconcile that view with

and Cronius (2nd half of 2nd cent. AD),²⁵ only Nicomachus of Gerasa, in his *Manual of Harmonics* can be ascribed a notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.²⁶

Beside these three main schools or tendencies, we also find the notion in e.g. the *Orations* of Maximus of Tyre (active in Rome in the 180s).²⁷

As for the second kind of evidence, it has become commonplace to talk of a general Middle-Platonist account of fate, including an account of its relation to τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The main sources of this theory are Ps.-Plutarch's *De fato*, Nemesius of Emesa's *De natura hominis*, and Calcidius's *In Timaeum*.²⁸ We also find a version of it, though with some elements missing, in Alcinous' *Didascalicus*, in Apuleius' *De Platone* as well as in Maximus of Tyre's *Orations*.

In what follows, I will go through some of the above-identified Middle-Platonist notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The aim is to discern both the general features of Middle-Platonist notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, as well as pointing to some internal divergences. In order to do so, we must first of all briefly state the central points of the Platonic passages that formed the intuitions behind the Middle-Platonist accounts of fate and its relation to τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Thus I start with a brief outline of the key Platonic pas-

the common notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Dillon's claim 1977, 377 with ref. to *Fr.* 48, that the view ascribed to the Hermetic writings by Iamblichus, (*De Myst.* VIII.6), i.e. that Man has two souls of which only the lower is subject to fate (ἐμαρμένῃ), 'would do equally well as a statement of Numenius' position', seems to lack real textual basis, though if true it would obviously indicate that Numenius might have applied the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν to the higher soul. Numenius indeed discussed divine providence and the origin of evil within his criticism of the Stoic account of principles, i.e. the generation of the world (*Fr.* 52 Des Places=Calcidius *In Timaeum* c. 295–299; 297,7–301,20 Washink), generation being in Numenius' view the encounter of providence—God's plan, work and activity—with chance—the evil chaotic matter, (*Fr.* 52.96ff. Des Places) the 'persuasive God and obedient necessity' (matter) (*Fr.* 52.127–130 Des Places), and it is not unlikely that he also criticized their view of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν in this context. Also, Numenius discussed the Stoic notion of assent, and might thus have said something on its being ἐφ' ἡμῖν as well (*Fr.* 45 Des Places=Porph. *On the capacities of the soul*, ap. Stob. *Anthol.* I.49,25; 349,19–22 Wachsmuth), though Numenius' strong interest in the debates between Stoics and Academic Sceptics (cf. *Fr.* 25–28 Des Places=Eus. *E.* XIV,5–9) could indicate that his discussion of assent should instead be placed in a purely epistemological context.

²⁵ As for Cronius, in several sources associated with the person and the views of Numenius, we know even less than of Numenius himself. Cf. Dillon 1977, 379–380.

²⁶ Nicomachus, at *HE* II.1.33, in passing opposes what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν with what is φουζόν, but gives no further account of what this means, and he will not be discussed in the present study.

²⁷ Cf. section 5.5.6.

²⁸ Cf. Bobzien 1998b, 146–152.

sages to most Middle-Platonist account of fate and the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. I then begin the analysis of Middle-Platonist notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν with two philosophers who by deviating in various respects from what I will refer to as the standard Middle-Platonist account, serve quite well to underline the distinctive features of that account, namely Philo of Alexandria and Plutarch. I then move on to the standard Middle-Platonist account. I thus analyse the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Alcinous' *Didascalicus*, Ps.-Plutarch's *De fato*, Nemesius of Emesa's *De natura hominis*, Calcidius' *In Timaeum*, Apuleius' *De Platone*, and in Maximus of Tyre's *Orations*. Finally, I attempt to discern the distinguishing features and internal variations as to the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Middle-Platonic sources.

5.2. *A note on the Platonic sources to Middle-Platonist notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν*

Given that the Middle-Platonist accounts of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν and fate often make reference to more or less the same limited number of Platonic passages, it seems useful to have a closer look at some of these passages before investigating their later applications. As in the case of the Aristotelian commentators, we will thus be able to see more clearly to what extent the commentators and defenders of Plato applied Plato's arguments and points outside their original contexts, and also to what extent they created Platonist accounts of issues that are absent in Plato's works. Notably, the Middle Platonists, although often referring to and commenting on Platonic passages, employed a technical vocabulary that is absent in Plato, and rather derived from contemporary readings of Aristotle. This is particularly clear in the case of their account of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, as will be evident further ahead.

The most significant trait of the Middle-Platonist conception of fate is the idea that fate has the form of political laws. Just as political laws state certain consequences for certain actions, so does fate. With this metaphor, the Middle Platonists thought they had found a way of saving, on the one hand, the conception that (in some sense) fate includes all things, and all things happen according to fate, and, on the other hand, the conception that some things must be (in some sense) ἐφ' ἡμῖν and not fated. In the case of political laws there is—roughly speaking—a difference in how different things are 'included' in the law, in that some things e.g. actions etc. are mentioned *as hypotheses*, i.e. 'if a person performs such and such actions', while other things

e.g. punishments are mentioned *as following from such hypotheses*, i.e. ‘such and such will be the consequences’. In a similar manner, the Middle-Platonist conception of fate has it that the divine law of fate includes all things, but it includes some things *as hypotheses* e.g. ‘if Laios begets a son’, and others *as following from such hypotheses* ‘Laios will be killed by his son’. The intuition that makes the political laws reasonable and the conception of fate modelled on them so attractive is, according to the Middle Platonists, that among the things mentioned as hypotheses, at least some are ἐφ’ ἡμῖν. Thus, the point is that what is ἐφ’ ἡμῖν is *included in fate* and yet *not fated*.

The key texts in Plato that the Middle Platonists referred to and that are the sources to this conception of fate and τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν are primarily found in the *Republic*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Laws*.

The Myth of Er in the *Republic* is the main source of the doctrine of hypothetical fate. The passage most relevant is the one where the soul of Er observes how a speaker informs the souls about the details of their awaiting choice of their next lives:

Here is the message of Lachesis, the maiden daughter of Necessity: ‘Ephemeral souls, this is the beginning of another cycle that will end with death. Your daemon or guardian spirit will not be assigned to you by lot; you will choose him. The one who has the first lot will be the first to choose a life to which he will then be bound by necessity. Virtue knows no master; each will possess it to a greater or less degree, depending on whether he values or disdains it. The responsibility lies with the one who makes the choice; the god has none’.²⁹

The elements of this account are thus (i) the fall of lots that constrains the choice of lives by determining which soul is going to choose first; (ii) the choice made by each soul of its proper guardian spirit; and (iii) the choice of the next life, to which the soul is then bound by necessity. In addition to these elements, we have the idea that (iv) this suffices for the soul making the choice to be the one and only responsible for and cause of the kind of life he will live, i.e. its degree of virtue, and (v) the conclusion from this, that god has no responsibility or is in no way the cause of this choice of life.

²⁹ Transl. Grube & Reeve 1997. *Rep.* 617d6–e5 Burnet: [...] “Ἀνάγκης θυγατρὸς κόρης Λαχέσεως λόγος. Ψυχαὶ ἐφήμεροι, ἀρχὴ ἄλλης περιόδου θνητοῦ γένους θανατηφόρου. οὐχ ὑμᾶς δαίμων λήξεται, ἀλλ’ ὑμεῖς δαίμονα αἰρήσεσθε. πρῶτος δ’ ὁ λαχὼν πρῶτος αἰρείσθω βίον ᾧ συνέσται ἐξ ἀνάγκης. ἀρετὴ δὲ ἀδέσποτον, ἦν τιμῶν καὶ ἀτιμάζων πλέον καὶ ἔλαττον αὐτῆς ἕκαστος ἔξει. αἰτία ἐλομένου· θεὸς ἀναίτιος.” [...].

In the *Timaeus*, within the account of the generation of individual souls, Plato describes how the god having created the souls presents the nature of the Universe and describes the ‘for-ordained laws’ (νόμοι εἰμαρμένοι) to them.³⁰ These include the necessary embodiment of the souls, and thus the constraints inflicted on the soul pertaining to its embodiment:

So, once the souls were of necessity implanted in bodies, and these bodies had things coming to them and leaving them, the first innate capacity they would of necessity come to have would be sense perception, which arises out of forceful disturbances. This they all would have. The second would be love, mingled with pleasure and pain. And they would come to have fear and spiritedness as well, plus whatever goes with having these emotions, as well as their natural opposites. And if they could master these emotions, their lives would be just, whereas if they were mastered by them they would be unjust.³¹

The depiction of the constraints put on the soul due to its embodied state as one of the for-ordained laws, or laws of fate (νόμοι εἰμαρμένοι), formed the basis of one of the key ideas in the Middle-Platonist theory of fate, namely that fate has the form of a law, which includes all activities of the souls as far as they are embodied, and which dictates general consequences for the different types of behaviour that the embodied souls may opt for.

The idea of fate as having the form of a law is also found primarily in *Laws*, Book X, where the Athenian defends the view that the gods exist and care for mankind, and that their power is inescapable.³² The Athenian states that:

So all things that contain soul change, the cause of their change lying within themselves, but as they change they move according to the ordinance and law of fate.³³

³⁰ *Tim.* 41e2–3 Burnet: [...] τὴν τοῦ παντὸς φύσιν ἔδειξεν, νόμους τε τοὺς εἰμαρμένους εἶπεν αὐταῖς [...].

³¹ Transl. Zeyl 1997. *Tim.* 42a3–b2 Burnet: [...] ὁπότε δὴ σώμασιν ἐμφυτευθεῖεν ἐξ ἀνάγκης, καὶ τὸ μὲν προσίοι, τὸ δ’ ἀπίοι τοῦ σώματος αὐτῶν, πρῶτον μὲν αἰσθήσιν ἀναγκαῖον εἶη μίαν πᾶσιν ἐκ βιαιῶν παθημάτων σύμφυτον γίγνεσθαι, δεύτερον δὲ ἡδονῇ καὶ λύπῃ μεμειγμένον ἔρωτα, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις φόβον καὶ θυμὸν ὅσα τε ἐπόμενα αὐτοῖς καὶ ὅποσα ἐναντίως πέφυκε διεστηκότα· ὧν εἰ μὲν κρατήσοιεν, δίξῃ βιώσοιντο, κρατηθέντες δὲ ἀδικίᾳ. [...].

³² For the Athenian’s statement that this is the issue at stake, and that the gods thus cannot be ‘bought’, e.g. by gifts, cf. *Leg.* 906d2f.

³³ Transl. Saunders 1997 with some changes (i.e. I stress the contrast hinted at by μὲν ... δὲ giving ‘but’ instead of Saunderson’s ‘and’). *Leg.* 904c6–9 Burnet: [...] Μεταβάλλει

The idea expressed in the passage, and reflected throughout the discussion, is that the changes of the ensouled beings are on the one hand to be accounted for with reference to their souls themselves, as the causes of such changes, while on the other hand, these changes all follow the law of fate. The idea that an all-inclusive conception of fate can be combined with the individual souls being the causes of and having the responsibility for their movements, perhaps implicit in the *Republic* and *Timaeus* passages above as well, is to a large extent the underlying intuition behind the Middle-Platonist theory of how fate is compatible with what is ἐφ' ἡμῶν, to which we will now turn.

5.3. *The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in Philo of Alexandria*

Philo discusses the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in three different treatises.³⁴ What we get here is an account which defends what Philo takes to be a common notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν as compatible with divine providence, both against those arguing that everything is ἐφ' ἡμῶν, and that providence and fate do not exist, and against those arguing that everything is fated, in the sense of necessitated. The account shares some of the intuitions behind Stoic uses, though Philo appears to have a slightly more pessimistic view as to our capacity to hinder external influences from entering our soul and affecting it negatively.

In *De Mutatione Nominum* (*On the change of Names*),³⁵ the notion occurs where Philo has established (from quotations of Moses) that 'good thinking and intending, good speaking and good doing make up, he means, human happiness just as their opposites make up unhappiness, since achievement of righteousness and sinning are found in all these

μὲν τοίνυν πάνθ' ὅσα μέτοχά ἐστιν ψυχῆς, ἐν ἑαυτοῖς κεκτημένα τὴν τῆς μεταβολῆς αἰτίαν, μεταβάλλοντα δὲ φέρεται κατὰ τὴν τῆς εἰμασμένης τάξιν καὶ νόμον [...].

³⁴ Since only Christian writers surely read Philo, one might question whether he should be included here, as well as whether he should be included in any list of Middle Platonists. Still, intellectually isolated from other platonizing writers or not, the mere fact that he develops similar themes along Platonist lines suffices as a reason for including him. Moreover, the differences between his way and the mainstream Middle-Platonist way of developing the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in fact makes him a particularly interesting point of comparison.

³⁵ The treatise, of which the complete title is *About those whose names are changed and why they have their names changed*, is an interpretation of Gen XVIII 1–5 & 15–22, i.e. God's changing the names of Abram into Abraham and Sarai into Sarah. Cf. Colson-Whitaker 1934, 128ff. and Arnaldez 1964, 11ff.

three places, heart, mouth and hand',³⁶ and then moved over to ranking the three corresponding ways of sinning. In spelling out the details of the three cases, Philo ascribes to Moses the view that while *wrongdoing* obviously is the worst thing, given that wrongdoers 'carry into actual execution what their ill-intended intentions have planned or their reckless tongues have uttered',³⁷ and intention is not subject to accusation and penalty at all, since it often involves involuntary elements,³⁸ bad speech falls in between these two. Philo's explanation for this is that: 'all that issues through the mouth he requires to make its defence and stand its trial on the principle that our speech depends on us.'³⁹

The interesting feature of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the passage is that it looks like the inversion of the e.g. Roman Stoic internalization of the notion, i.e. the restriction of its application to the rational part of the human soul alone on the intuition that what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, is by definition not subject to external hindrance. On the other hand, this is precisely the intuition Philo expresses in his argument for *denying* that intention (γνώμη) and thought is ἐφ' ἡμῖν.⁴⁰ From, say, an Epictetean point of view, the question immediately arises how *doing x and not doing x*, as well as *saying y and not saying y* can be ἐφ' ἡμῖν, while *intending or thinking z or not intending or thinking z* are not, since actions are dependent on other agents, physical factors etc., and can be hindered, while presumably the acts of the rational soul cannot. Is it possible to identify what lies

³⁶ *Mut.* 237.5–238.2 Wendland: [...] ἐκ γὰρ εὐβουλίας καὶ εὐλογίας καὶ εὐπραξίας τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην εὐδαιμονίαν συνίστασθαι, ὥσπερ καὶ τὴν κακοδαιμονίαν ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων. ἐν γὰρ τοῖς αὐτοῖς τό τε κατορθοῦν καὶ ἀμαρτάνειν χωρίοις ἐστί, καρδίᾳ, στόματι, χειρὶ. [...].

³⁷ *Mut.* 244.3–245.1 Wendland: τοῖς [...] ἔργῳ ἐπεξιοῦσιν ἃ γνώμη μὲν ἀγνώμονι ἐβουλεύσαντο, προπετεῖα δὲ γλώττης ἐξελάλησαν. [...]. It might seem that 'intention' is a too specific rendering of γνώμη here, and that Philo is rather thinking of something like 'apprehension' or 'impression'. This would make sense, in so far as it makes Philo's position similar to an early Stoic one, namely that the impressions are not as such ἐφ' ἡμῖν. However, such an interpretation does not make much sense in Philo's account of action as the expression of a γνώμη, while 'intention', I take it, does.

³⁸ *Mut.* 243.3–4 Wendland: [...] τὴν μὲν γνώμην [...] ἀκουσίοις τὰ πολλὰ μεταβολαῖς χρωμένῃν [...]. The same point is made some ten lines above, in terms of 'thinking what one ought not to' coming about without one willing it. *Mut.* 241.1–3: [...] τοῦ νοεῖν τὰ μὴ προσήκοντα [...] ἀβουλῶν [...].

³⁹ Transl. Colson-Whitaker (slightly changed). *Mut.* 243.6–244.1 Wendland: [...] τὰ δ' ὅσα ἂν ἐξέλθῃ διὰ τοῦ στόματος, ταῦτ' εἰς ἀπόλογον καὶ εὐθύνας ἄγει, ὥς ἂν δὴ τοῦ λέγειν ἐφ' ἡμῖν ὑπάρχοντος. [...].

⁴⁰ I take it that the use of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as the criterion for something being subject to moral appraisal in the case of *speech* implies that *wrongdoing* being subject to moral appraisal is also ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and thus that *intention* not being subject to moral appraisal is not ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

behind Philo's notion here? One preliminary hypothesis would be that the perspective from which Philo makes the 'ranking' of the three kinds of acts, is rather more defensive, as it were, in that it acknowledges that our motivating reasons are often externally induced and that what we can do about them consists rather in *blocking* them from being expressed in bad speech or bad action, than in actually blocking them from getting into our souls and affecting us in the first place. From this interpretation, Philo would then have a notion not so different from Chrysippus', though being possibly more pessimistic as to at what point an agent can put an end to being ruled by external impressions.⁴¹

In *On dreams, that they are God-sent II*, Philo describes the behaviour of the biblical Babel-builders, here philosophically corresponding to those who on Philo's view boast in their human pride of denying providence and God's omnipotence.⁴² Philo depicts them as saying: 'We are the leaders, we are the potentates; all things rest on us, who can cause good things or their opposites, except we.'⁴³ Philo's point is quite obvious,⁴⁴ namely that these people, denying the divine power that really governs the matters in question, ascribe omnipotence to themselves. Philo here seems to be at odds with the more common-sensical notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in *De Mutatione*, that at least some things, e.g. actions, are ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Strictly speaking, though, by underlining the omnipotence of God here, he is not actually denying that any human affairs are ἐφ' ἡμῖν, but he is rather simply refuting the view that *all* things depend on Man.

In *Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus*,⁴⁵ Philo is puzzled by the lines 'God led the animals to Adam to see what he would call them',⁴⁶ since it might seem to imply that God was in some sense in

⁴¹ On Philo's notion in relation to early stoicism, cf. the note above on the translation of γνώμη.

⁴² Cf. Colson-Whitaker 1934, 570, n. A, and 610, who identify the philosophical targets attacked by Philo here as 'Epicureans and Sceptics, so far as the denial of providence is concerned'. Savinel 1962, 16 rather sees a reference to Protagoras (sic!).

⁴³ *De Somniis* II.291.2–4: [...] ἡμεῖς οἱ ἡγεμόνες, ἡμεῖς οἱ δυναστεύοντες· ἐφ' ἡμῖν ὁρμεῖ τὰ πάντα· ἀγαθῶν καὶ τῶν ἐναντίων τίνες αἴτιοι (ὅτι μὴ) ἡμεῖς; [...]. Colson-Whitaker translates 'all things are based on us'. Here, the notion is thus emphasized with a verb (ὁρμεῖω).

⁴⁴ The point becomes even more clear a bit further ahead, when the same people are said to mock those believing in something like a theory of fate or providence.

⁴⁵ The *In Genesis* consists of six books, but only small fragments of the Greek text is extant, while the rest is only in an Armenian version. On the issues of the sources to the *In Genesis* in general, cf. Mercier 1979, 15 ff.; on the *fragmenta* in particular, cf. Petit 1978, 13 ff. The notion fortunately occurs in a passage preserved in the *fragmenta*.

⁴⁶ I.e. of *Gen.* II, 19.

doubt, which of course he should not be. Philo's solution is that God's question as it were formed part of God's testing and training Adam, or Man. Philo states:

Rather, since He has given an intellect to the first earth-born and virtuous man, according to which he, having become wise, is naturally disposed to reason, just in the way which a master (proceeds with) his pupil, He moves him to the proper demonstration, and he sees the noble products of his soul. And again, by this He clearly represents all that is voluntary and depends on us, confounding those saying that everything exists by necessity. Or, because Mankind would have to use (them), for this reason He granted Man to determine them.⁴⁷

The general impression we get here is that Philo simply sees an opportunity to criticize *those saying that everything exists by necessity*, and though perhaps by a far-fetched association, does so in taking the mere fact that the names of animals were not created or determined by necessity to be a counter-example against such a view. Thus, his conception of the name-giving event is that the names of animals we use are not by necessity as they are, neither in the sense that God determined them for us, nor in the sense that they were in any other way fixed so that God could not make them different. On the contrary, the names were not determined and God, while being fully capable of determining them himself, granted this task to the first Man. Now, as to the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν here, we can at least say that the example of giving the names to the animals is stated as depending on Adam. Evidently God could have intervened if, say, he would have been unhappy with any of the names Adam came up with, which is also evident from the context, i.e. of proving that the biblical passage does not imply that God was in doubt, or in any other sense less than omnipotent. In this respect, the notion differs from the stronger, Epictetean notion, according to which if something is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, then not even God can hinder us in doing it.⁴⁸ I take it, though, that the point Philo wants to make is less precise than that, i.e. he simply expresses the view that some things depend on us, i.e. we are the ones responsible for them happening or being in a cer-

⁴⁷ *In Genesis* 1.62, 1.3–1.63, 1. Petit: [...] ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ νοῦν ἔδωκε τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τῷ πρώτῳ γιγενεῖ καὶ σπουδαίῳ καθ' ὃν ἐπιστημονικὸς ὢν πέφυκε λογίζεσθαι, καθάπερ ὑφηγητῆς γνώριμον, κινεῖ πρὸς ἐπίδειξιν οἰκείαν καὶ ἀφορᾷ τὰ ἄριστα αὐτοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς ἔργονα. Φανερώς δὲ πάλιν καὶ διὰ τούτου πᾶν τὸ ἐκούσιον καὶ ἐφ' ἡμῖν διατυποῖ, τοὺς πάντα κατ' ἀνάγκην εἶναι λέγοντας δυσωπῶν. Ἡ ἐπεὶ ἔμελλον οἱ ἄνθρωποι χρῆσθαι, διὰ τοῦτο ἄνθρωπον αὐτὰ θέσθαι προσέταττεν. [...]. Cf. also Marcus 1953, II, *Appendix A*. On the Armenian version of this passage, cf. Marcus 1953, 13; Mercier 1979, 85–87.

⁴⁸ On this point in Epictetus, see section 4.4.

tain way (i.e. just as it depended on Adam whether the names he came up with were the right ones or not). The simile of a Master and his pupil, together with the denial of God ever being in doubt, here indicates that there is no question as to whether God knows what we ought to do, but rather, by giving us intellect and the capacity to reason and to come up with solutions of our own, he also gives us a realm of things depending on us, and not on him alone. Implicitly, the account given can as well be seen as stating that divine providence is all-inclusive, i.e. including both what is fated and what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, while these two latter classes are mutually exclusive.

To conclude then, Philo's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the *De Mutatione* designates what we can rationally affect or hinder the expression of. With this notion actions and speech are ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Intentions, though, such as intentions to act and speak in certain ways, are not ἐφ' ἡμῖν, the reason being that they often involve involuntary elements. A slightly different notion is found in the *In Genesim*, one in which things are ἐφ' ἡμῖν in virtue of our God-given intellect (νοῦς) according to which we—when we become wise—are capable of reasoning. Although this notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν lacks the explicitly pessimistic feature of the one in *De Mutatione*, it is quite clear from both cases that in Philo's view (1) things are ἐφ' ἡμῖν if they have been or could have been subject to rational scrutiny guided by our intellect, and (2) many of our inner states such as our intentions to act in certain ways are themselves not ἐφ' ἡμῖν, since they have not been rationally scrutinized. This close link between the notion and rationality indicates that the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Philo is what we have called an *exclusive* notion.⁴⁹

5.4. *The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Plutarch*

Plutarch discusses the notion in many of his works.⁵⁰ It is quite clear from this evidence that Plutarch has what we have called an inclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, in that the class of things ἐφ' ἡμῖν are ἐφ' ἡμῖν independently of whether we deliberate about them or not. The issue for Plutarch in the relevant passages is to defend something like the autonomy of human agency. For this to be achieved on Plutarch's view, it suffices, in the light of the other causes of things happening as they

⁴⁹ For various related aspects in Philo, cf. also Winston 1974–1975 and Wolfson 1942.

⁵⁰ Plutarch lived c. AD 45–c. 120.

do or being as they are, namely fate (εἰμαρμένη), and chance (τύχη), to simply identify a class of things separate from the classes of what comes about by these other causes, namely a class of things for which *we* are the only causes (αἰτίαι). I will begin by discussing the passages most clearly justifying this interpretation, and then bring forth some passages that might seem to contradict it.

In the *Quaestiones Convivales* (*Table talks*), book IX question 5, Plutarch has his brother Lamprias deliver an interpretation of several Platonic passages and in particular the myth of Er of the Republic,⁵¹ so as to extract a Platonist (though not quite Platonic) account of fate (εἰμαρμένη), chance (τύχη) and τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν.⁵² Lamprias thus states about Plato:

For he always sticks to the three causes, he who indeed first or most well observed, how that which is according to fate naturally has come to mingle and interweave with that which is according to luck, and *that which depends on us* with either one of these and with both simultaneously. And in this case he has admirably suggested the influence that each one exerts in our affairs, assigning the choice of lives to *that which depends on us* (for virtue has no master and neither has vice), linking to the necessity of fate that those live well who have chosen rightly and under the contrary [conditions] those who have chosen badly; then, the fall of the allotments being scattered unorderedly introduces chance, which through the kinds of upbringing and society that different groups happen to enjoy predetermines many things about us.⁵³

What we get here is a tri-partition of causes (αἰτίαι). Integrated with this tri-partition we find a version of the theory of hypothetical fate, i.e. it depends on us what sort of life we choose, but once the choice is made, the necessity of fate (εἰμαρμένης ἀνάγκη) determines the consequences. In addition, many aspects are determined by chance (τύχη).⁵⁴

⁵¹ *Rep.* 614b–621d.

⁵² Plato only suggests a similar tri-partition of causes, e.g. at *Leg.* 709b; *Leg.* 888e. Cf. also Teodorsson 1996, 328–329 for suggestions as to the source of this list of causes.

⁵³ *Quaest. Conviv.* 740.C.6–740.D.8 Hubert: [...] ἀεὶ μὲν γὰρ ἀπτεται τῶν τριῶν αἰτιῶν, ἅτε δὴ πρῶτος ἢ μάλιστα συνιδὼν, ὅπη τὸ καθ' εἰμαρμένην τῷ κατὰ τύχην αὐθις τε τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἐκατέρῳ καὶ συναμφοτέροις ἐπιμίγνυσθαι καὶ συμπλέκεσθαι πέφυκε. νῦν δὲ θαυμαστώως, ἣν ἔχει δύναμιν ἐν τοῖς ἡμετέροις πράγμασιν ἕκαστον, ὑποδεδήλωκεν, τὴν μὲν αἴρεσιν τῶν βίων τῷ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἀποδιδούς (ἀρετὴ γὰρ ἀδέσποτον καὶ κακία), τὸ δ' εὖ βιοῦν τοὺς ὀρθῶς ἐλομένους καὶ τὰναντία τοὺς κακῶς εἰμαρμένης ἀνάγκη συνάπτων· αἱ δὲ τῶν κλήρων ἀτάκτως διασπειρομένων ἐπιπτώσεις τὴν τύχην παρεισάγουσιν καὶ τροφαῖς καὶ πολιτείαις, ὧν ἕκαστοι λαγχάνουσι, πολλὰ τῶν ἡμετέρων προκαταλαμβάνουσιν. [...]. On this passage, cf. Frazier & Sirinelli 1996, 256, n. 55; Teodorsson 1996, 324; 328–330; Brenk 1977, 155–156; and Minar-Sandbach-Helmbold 1961, 244–247.

⁵⁴ The difficulty of spelling out how chance comes in here, due to the oscillation between direct allusions to the Myth of Er passage, and to the everyday action situa-

A further nuance is added after the passage. According to Lamprias or Plutarch, while εἰμαρμένη, τύχη and τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν are all causes (αἰτίαι), what happens by chance (κατὰ τύχην) has no cause, for if such a cause is identified, this simply implies that what we took to be something happening by chance (κατὰ τύχην) rather happened by some sort of fate and providence (ἐκ τινος εἰμαρμένης καὶ προνοίας).⁵⁵ This remark actually redefines the tri-partition, so that the choice of lives is something ἐφ' ἡμῖν, i.e. we are the αἰτία of it. The consequences, i.e. what follows from our choice, is determined by εἰμαρμένη, i.e. εἰμαρμένη is the αἰτία of it; and these two are, strictly speaking the kinds of αἰτίαι there are. However, what cannot be ascribed to either of these two strictly lacks an explanation in terms of a cause (αἰτία), and must be ascribed to chance (τύχη). The point of observing this modification of the tri-partition is that it tells us that from Plutarch's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν here, there are indeed uncaused events, but these are entirely distinct from what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and should rather be referred to chance (τύχη).⁵⁶ There is nothing uncaused about what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Simply, the point is that in our affairs (ἐν τοῖς ἡμετέροις πράγμασιν) some things do depend on us, i.e. we and not εἰμαρμένη are their αἰτία.⁵⁷

In the early *Whether land or sea animals are cleverer*, Plutarch has his father Autobulus state that:

tions it is used to explain, is common to most Middle-Platonist accounts referring to this passage. In the mythological context, referring our upbringing to the fall of the allotments, which in Plato's myth precede the initial pre-life choice and merely determines which soul chooses first etc, seems funny. Plutarch is, however, here using the myth quite liberally and thus, skipping the mythological order of events, simply refers to the fall of the allotments as a metaphor for all the contextual factors in our lives which are neither ἐφ' ἡμῖν, nor consequences of things which are in themselves ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

⁵⁵ *Quaest. Conviv.* 740.D.10–11.

⁵⁶ Though this is not the place to dwell on Plutarch's use of τύχη in general, it often, as in the passages studied here, serves as a sort of explanatory trash-bin class. A plausible reason for this use could be, given the references to the myth of Er of Plato's Republic, that Plutarch brings it in when dealing with difficult cases, i.e. cases where we do not just have a virtuous person living well, or a vicious person living badly, but, for instance, an acknowledged virtuous person living less than well, in poverty etc. References to τύχη in such cases allows Plutarch to save two phenomena, namely that *virtue implies living well*, i.e. we are the cause of how we live (αἰτία ἐλομένου *Rep.* 617c4) and when this appears not to be the case, this is not to be referred to the other kinds of αἰτίαι, i.e. εἰμαρμένη and προνοία (and God, as this Stoic identification would indicate), thus *God is still not to blame* (θεὸς ἀναίτιος *Rep.* 617e5).

⁵⁷ According to Brenk 1977, 155 the 'selection of lives' is conceived here as 'the selection of the whole entity of good and evil acts which make up a man's life', but there is nothing in the present passage that implies such a specific interpretation.

For they themselves do not concede to Epicurus, in order to save the highest considerations, a thing so small and trivial, [as] a single atom slightly deviating—in order for the stars and living creatures and chance to come in, and for that which depends on us not to vanish.⁵⁸

The context, I take it, gives at hand that what Plutarch states here is simply that Epicurus, in order to save the highest, most important things such as the common notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, acknowledges that some atoms slightly deviate from fate, i.e. are exceptions to the fate principle. In Plutarch's interpretation, Epicurus by allowing such atomic declinations, thus allows that chance may enter into the account of why things happen the way they do, and moreover thus avoids that the common notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν is done away with. His point is that the Stoics, who are the target in the passage, did not agree with Epicurus on this point. Given what we find in *Quaestiones convivales*, Plutarch's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν here is not surprising. He thinks the proper account of why things happen the way they do (which he seems to take to be Plato's account) should include fate (εἰμαρμένη), chance (τύχη) and τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, as well as something on how these factors are intermingled. Thus, he is in our passage hostile to the (Stoic) account because he thinks it excludes both chance (τύχη) and τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and he to some extent appears to take Epicurus as being on his own side in the controversy.

In the *De Stoicorum Repugnantis*, the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν comes up when Plutarch attacks Chrysippus' account of fate. Plutarch thinks that Chrysippus' view implies that τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν is done away with. Thus, he rhetorically asks:

Shall we say then, that assents do not depend on us, and neither the virtues or vices nor doing the right thing or wrong-doing; or shall we say that fate is deficient and determination is indeterminate and the motions

⁵⁸ *De sollertia animalium* 964.C.5–9 Hubert 1971: [...] οὐδὲ γὰρ αὐτοὶ τῷ Ἐπικούρῳ διδόασιν ὑπὲρ τῶν μεγίστων σμικρὸν οὕτω πρᾶγμα καὶ φαῦλον, ἄτομον παρεγκλῖναι μίαν ἐπὶ τοῦλάχιστον, ὅπως ἄστροι καὶ ζῶα καὶ τύχη παρεισέλθῃ καὶ τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν μὴ ἀπόληται. [...]. (=Epicurus. fr. 281, 351 Usener, who for some reason believes the target to be not only Stoics but also Peripatetics. Arrighetti 1973 does not include the passage). Sandbach's κατὰ τύχην for καὶ τύχη (accepted by Helmbold, *ad loc.*) should not be accepted, since it makes what happens by the living creatures, which I take to refer to τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, a subclass of what happens by chance (κατὰ τύχην), which contradicts what Plutarch defends elsewhere, namely that εἰμαρμένη and τύχη and τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν are all causes (αἰτίαι), and that what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν does not happen κατὰ τύχην. Cf. *Quaest. Conv* 740.C.6–740.D.8.

and rests of Zeus are incomplete? for the former is the consequence if fate is a sufficient cause, and the latter if it is only a predisposing cause, since, if it is the sufficient cause of all things, it does away with that which depends on us and the voluntary, but if a predisposing cause, looses the character of being unimpedible and effective.⁵⁹

Plutarch's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν here reveals the same concern with the fate principle, i.e. that everything happens according to fate, as above in *Whether land or sea animals are cleverer*. Here as well, he assumes his own tri-partition of causes view, in which the only way to make room for τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν is to assign a specific range of things to be explained with reference to it alone, and which is distinct from the range of things for which fate is the cause; these two being, in their turn, distinct from the range of things happening according to chance. Thus, in Plutarch's view, given the all-inclusive fate principle, either one must give up τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, or, one must modify, i.e. put a restriction on the fate-principle, such that in the end the fate-principle is not really all-inclusive, but in fact admits of some things happening not καθ' εἰμαρμένην, and thus being e.g. ἐφ' ἡμῖν. This position is particularly interesting, since it clearly contradicts the attempt within the standard Middle-Platonist account of fate and τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν,⁶⁰ of saving a version of the fate principle, which states that all things happen in accordance with fate. Plutarch's reluctance towards the fate principle in the present passage might as such seem to cover only its Stoic interpretation, or the interpretation of it he ascribes to the Stoics. However, as becomes clear from the collected evidence of Plutarch's position on the relation between fate and what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, he is perfectly happy with excluding some things, in fact both what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν and what happens by chance (τύχη), from the realm of fate, and makes no effort to argue that fate 'in some sense' includes these latter things as well.

In the *Life of Cleomenes*, Plutarch describes the Spartan ruler Cleomenes' mother Cratesicleia as saying:

⁵⁹ *De Stoic. Rep.* 1056.C.9–D.8 Westman: [...] πότερον οὖν τὰς συγκαταθέσεις μὴ λέγωμεν ἐφ' ἡμῖν εἶναι μηδὲ τὰς ἀρετὰς μηδὲ τὰς κακίας μηδὲ τὸ κατορθοῦν μηδὲ τὸ ἀμαρτάνειν, ἢ τὴν εἰμαρμένην λέγωμεν ἐλλείπουσαν εἶναι καὶ τὴν πεπωμένην ἀπεράττων καὶ τὰς τοῦ Διὸς κινήσεις καὶ σχέσεις ἀσυντελέστους; τούτων γὰρ ἔπεται τὰ μὲν τῷ αὐτοτελῇ τὰ δὲ τῷ προκαταρκτικῇ μόνον αἰτίαν εἶναι τὴν εἰμαρμένην. αὐτοτελὴς μὲν γὰρ αἰτία πάντων οὓσα τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ τὸ ἐκούσιον ἀναρρεῖ, προκαταρκτικὴ δὲ τὸ ἀκώλυτος εἶναι καὶ τελεσιουργὸς ἀπόλλυσιν. [...]. On the terminology used in the passage, cf. Cherniss 1976, notes *ad loc.*

⁶⁰ On which, see below.

‘Come O king of the Lacedaemonians, when we go forth let no one see us weeping or do anything unworthy of Sparta. For this depends on us, and this alone; but the fortunes, will be as the Deity may grant.’⁶¹

It is commonly pointed out that both Cleomenes and his mother—as depicted by Plutarch—seem to be influenced by Stoic thinking.⁶² Be that as it may, the notion here fits rather nicely into the picture we have seen earlier. The sphere of what is ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, including virtuous behaviour, is distinct from the sphere of fortune (αἱ τύχαι).⁶³ Moreover, there is no explicit mention of choice or reasoning, or assent for that matter, being demanded for something being ἐφ’ ἡμῖν.

In *Consolatio ad Apollonium*, Plutarch states that:

The suffering and affliction when one’s son has died, has a natural cause of pain, and it does not depend on us. For I myself do not agree with those who praise in hymns that harsh and austere indifference, which is beyond both what is possible and what is fitting.⁶⁴

This anti-Stoic statement about grief seems to rest on a distinction between what is ἐφ’ ἡμῖν on the one hand, and what has a natural

⁶¹ *Cleom.* 43.7.2–43.8.1 Ziegler 1971: [...] ὁ βασιλεὺς Λακεδαιμονίων, ὅπως ἐπὶ ἔξω γενόμεθα μηδεὶς ἴδῃ δακρύοντας ἡμᾶς μηδ’ ἀνάξιόν τι τῆς Σπάρτης ποιοῦντας. τοῦτο γὰρ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν μόνον· αἱ τύχαι δ’ ὅπως ἂν ὁ δαίμων διδῷ πάροισι. [...].

⁶² E.g. Flacelière & Chambry 1976, 64, n. 2 detect the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν here as Stoic terminology and give two plausible reasons for this Stoic element: (a) the philosopher Sphairos (disciple of Zeno, founder of the Stoa) influenced Cleomenes during a long time, and thus probably his entire family as well. Sphairos is said to have taught Cleomenes as a boy (at *Agis* 23.3.1 Zeigler), and later to have helped Cleomenes with the rebuilding of Spartan education (at *Agis* 32.4.1 Zeigler). Cf. also Diog. Laert. *Vitae* VII.37 and Flacelière & Chambry 1976, 42, n. 1; 13f. Or (b): Plutarch might here follow the historian Phylarch, who seems to have been a Stoic as well. Though Flacelière & Chambry 1976, 9ff. discuss Phylarch as the main source of the two biographies, they give no proof of his Stoicism, only of his sympathy for Sparta and Cleomenes, but refer (p. 13, n. 5) to the opinion of Ollier 1936, 540ff., that Phylarch professed Stoicism. In any case, I take it they assume that (i) the views ascribed to Cleomenes and his mother reflect views of the Early Stoa, thus (ii) the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν in the sayings ascribed to Cleomenes and his mother reflects the use in the Early Stoa, rather than Plutarch’s own use. I, on the contrary, think that the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν here, given its similarity with Plutarch’s distinction elsewhere between what is ἐφ’ ἡμῖν and what depends on τύχη, is Plutarch’s own, and thus not early Stoic.

⁶³ On Plutarch’s preference for this opposition of Τύχη and Ἀρετή, cf. Flacelière & Chambry 1976, 16, and Brenk 1977, 145–183.

⁶⁴ *Consolatio.* 102.C.6–10 Babbitt: [...] Τὸ μὲν οὖν ἀλγεῖν καὶ δάκνεσθαι τελευτήσαντος υἱοῦ φυσικὴν ἔχει τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς λύπης, καὶ οὐκ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν. οὐ γὰρ ἔγωγε συμφέρομαι τοῖς ὕμνοισι τὴν ἀγχιον καὶ σκληρὰν ἀπάθειαν, ἔξω καὶ τοῦ δυνατοῦ καὶ τοῦ συμφέροντος οὖσαν. [...]. The 2nd part is practically a quote from Cic. *Tusc.* III.12, (who himself quotes Crantor the Academic).

cause (φυσικὴ ἀρχή) on the other. The conclusion that Plutarch draws here actually assumes such a distinction. He is arguing that, since what has a natural cause is not ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and (this) grief has a natural cause, those (Stoics) praising the extinction of grief as such, and the attainment of ἀπάθεια, praise what is impossible, the present case thus being a counter-example. That Plutarch thinks the extinction of grief and achieving ἀπάθεια is also neither fitting nor expedient is an additional, separate matter which we do not have to consider here.

In *De tranquillitate animi*,⁶⁵ Plutarch refers to Plato's metaphor of life as a game of dice employed to distinguish the effort of throwing as well as we can on the one hand, and the effort to make the best out of the result on the other.⁶⁶ He states that:

But of these, while the throwing does not depend on us, to accept in a suitable manner what happens because of chance, and to assign to each event its place, in which both what is proper to us will help the most, and what is unwanted will cause the least harm to anyone, that is our task, if we are really wise.⁶⁷

This interesting passage, though there is a variation in terminology from what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν to what is ἡμέτερον ἔργον,⁶⁸ is not only compatible with, but moreover renders slightly more elaborate the opposition of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν and what depends on τύχη (e.g. τὰ γινόμενα παρὰ τῆς τύχης). In addition, the point made about what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν seems to be a Stoic one, or at least a version of the position that only the correct use of impressions (ἡ ὀρθὴ χρῆσις φαντασιῶν) is ἐφ' ἡμῖν.⁶⁹ Further ahead

⁶⁵ For an overview of the different suggestions as to Plutarch's sources in writing this treatise, cf. Helmbold 1962, 163–165.

⁶⁶ Plato, *Rep.* 604 c (also quoted in *Consolatio* 112.E–F). The metaphor of life as a game of dice-throwing became quite common after Plato. Most relevant to our present interests is its employment in Epictetus, *Diss.* II.5.3, who makes a point similar to Plutarch's.

⁶⁷ *De tranquillitate animi* 467.A.11–B.4 Pohlenz: [...] τούτων δὲ τὸ μὲν βάλλειν οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, τὸ δὲ προσηκόντως δέχεσθαι τὰ γινόμενα παρὰ τῆς τύχης καὶ νέμειν ἐκάστω τόπον, ἐν ᾧ καὶ τὸ οἰκεῖον ὠφελίσει μάλιστα καὶ τὸ ἀβούλητον ἥκιστα λυπήσει τοὺς ἐπιτυγχάνοντας, ἡμέτερον ἔργον ἐστίν, ἂν εὖ φρονώμεν [...]. Dumortier & Defradas 1975 follow Amyot's emendation προσηκόντως instead of προσηκόντως (in Δ), and thus get 'avec douceur' instead of 'in a suitable manner', while preferring τὰ διδόμενα (in Δ) for τὰ γινόμενα (the other MSS).

⁶⁸ The latter formula is, however, part of Stoic terminology as well, e.g. Epict. *Diss.* II.5.4.1: [...] τοῦτο ἥδη ἐμὸν ἔργον ἐστίν [...]. This is where the Dice-metaphor is also used. Also *Diss.* II.16.10.2–3: [...] πότερον ἡμέτερον ἔργον ἐστίν ἢ ἀλλότριον [...].

⁶⁹ Cf. Epict. *Diss.* I.1.7.2–3; II.19.32.4. Musonius *Fr.* 38. Dumortier & Defradas 1975, 303, n. 7 quote Musonius *Fr.* 38, but then give other references (e.g. John of

in the *De tranquillitate animi*, Plutarch states that in reply to a seemingly fatalist verse of Menander, we can say that:

No man alive may say, 'I shall not *suffer* this', yet while still alive one can say, 'I will not *do* this: I will not lie nor play the villain nor defraud nor scheme'. For this depends on us and is not a small but a great help toward tranquility of mind. (My italics).⁷⁰

The point made here is practically the same as the one before, but from a different perspective. Some things happen to us and as long as we are alive, we cannot be sure what will or will not happen to us, and in any case it is not ἐφ' ἡμῖν whether it does or not. On the other hand, some things are ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Whereas in the former passage Plutarch pointed out that our dealing with what happened to us was ἐφ' ἡμῖν, here he rather takes the perspective of hindrance, or power to hinder something from happening, and presents a list of things the hindrance or avoidance of which are indeed ἐφ' ἡμῖν.⁷¹

The passages that might seem to contradict the interpretation that Plutarch has an inclusive notion occur in two of the *Lives*.

First of all, in the *Life of Caius Marcius Coriolanus*, Plutarch defends Homer's tendency of explaining unforeseen events by referring to some god. The critics of Homer, according to Plutarch, say that 'he makes it impossible to believe in everyone's capacity to deliberate about one's choice' (τὸν ἐκάστου λογισμὸν τῆς προαιρέσεως ἄπιστον καθιστάντος).⁷² To refute the critics, Plutarch spells out the details of what he takes to be the nature of Homer's references to divine interference, saying that 'those acts which are natural, and customary, and resulting according to reason, he attributes to what depends on us.' (ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν εἰκότα

Chrysostomos) which seems to imply that they merely see a parallel in the distinction between what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν and what is not, and perhaps in the occurrence in the *Fr.* 38 of the notion of εὐθυμία.

⁷⁰ *De tranquillitate animi* 476.E.5–9 Pohlenz: [...] οὐκ ἔστιν εἰπεῖν ζῶντα τοῦτ' οὐ πείσομαι, ἀλλ' ἔστιν εἰπεῖν ζῶντα τοῦτ' οὐ ποιήσω. οὐ ψεύσομαι, οὐ ῥαδιουργήσω, οὐκ ἀποστερήσω, οὐκ ἐπιβουλεύσω. τοῦτο γὰρ ἐφ' ἡμῖν κείμενον οὐ μικρὸν ἀλλὰ μέγα πρὸς εὐθυμίαν πάρεστιν. [...].

⁷¹ It is striking that though Dumortier & Defradas 1975, 93ff. mention that Plutarch's friend Fundanus the senator, who is mentioned in both *De tranquillitate animi* and *De cohibenda ira*, was a pupil of Musonius, they do not, in the discussion of Plutarch's sources (pp. 89–93), discuss the relation between Musonius doctrines and the ones put forth here by Plutarch. Nor do we find such a discussion in Helmbold 1962, 163–165.

⁷² *Cor* 32.5.11–32.6.1.

καὶ συνήθη καὶ κατὰ λόγον περαινόμενα τῷ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἀποδίδωσι).⁷³ His explanation of the Homeric 'middle-way' is that:

he does not represent the god as taking away, but as prompting, a man's choice of action; nor yet as creating impulses in a man, but rather impressions which lead to impulses, and by these his action is not made involuntary, but he gives the beginning to what is voluntary, while courage and hope are added to sustain him. For either the influence of the gods must be wholly excluded from all initiating power over our actions, or there would be some other way through which they assist and co-operate with men. They certainly do not mould our bodies by their direct agency, nor give the requisite change to the action of our hands and feet, but rather, by certain beginnings, impressions, and purposes, they rouse the active and elective powers of our spirits, or, in the opposite case, divert and check them.⁷⁴

Now the context here is quite obviously one of preserving the common notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, while allowing some notion of divine intervention as an instance of divine providence. Plutarch's argument shows that as regards his notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν here, it suffices to locate the impulse of an action in the agent, i.e. as arising in the agent, for the following action to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν. That the beginning of the impulse was an impression put there by a god is in Plutarch's view then fully compatible with such an action being ἐφ' ἡμῖν. It is clear, then, that the notion in play here serves to depict the autonomy of the agent in the sense that the agent acted from his own impulse.

The context might seem to imply an exclusive notion here. However, while this is clearly the case with the critics, who are worried about seeing Homer as 'making it impossible to believe in everyone's capacity to deliberate about one's choice' (τὸν ἐκάστου λογισμόν τῆς προαιρέσεως ἄπιστον καθιστάντος), the same cannot be said about Plutarch, who merely states that in Homer's fully acceptable way, 'those acts which are *natural*, and *customary*, and *resulting according to reason*, he attributes to what depends on us.' (ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν εἰκότα καὶ συνήθη καὶ κατὰ λόγον

⁷³ Cor 32.6.1–32.6.3.

⁷⁴ Cor 32.7.2–32.8.7: [...] οὐκ ἀναιροῦντα ποιεῖ τὸν θεόν, ἀλλὰ κινοῦντα τὴν προαίρεσιν, οὐδ' ὁρμάς ἐνεργαζόμενον, ἀλλὰ φαντασίας ὁρμῶν ἀγωγούς, αἷς οὐδὲ ποιεῖ τὴν προᾶξιν ἀκούσιον, ἀλλὰ τῷ ἐκουσίῳ δίδωσιν ἀρχήν, καὶ τὸ θαρρεῖν καὶ τὸ ἐλπίζειν προστίθησιν. ἢ γὰρ ἀπαλλακτέον ὅλως τὰ θεῖα πάσης αἰτίας καὶ ἀρχῆς τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς, ἢ τις ἂν ἄλλος εἴη τρόπος ὃ βοηθοῦσιν ἀνθρώποις καὶ συνεργοῦσιν, οὐ τὸ σῶμα δήπου πλάττοντες ἡμῶν, οὐδὲ τὰς χεῖρας ὥς δεῖ μετατιθέντες αὐτοὶ καὶ τοὺς πόδας, ἀλλὰ τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ πρακτικὸν καὶ προαιρετικὸν ἀρχαῖς τισι καὶ φαντασίαις καὶ ἐπινοίαις ἐγείροντες, ἢ τοῦναντίον ἀποστρέφοντες καὶ ἰστάντες. [...].

περαινόμενα τῷ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἀποδίδωσι), which we should see as a list of types of actions rather than the three necessary conditions for any action being ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The statement might seem to imply a sort of asymmetry in the notion, in that only, as it were, good actions are ἐφ' ἡμῖν. I take it, though, that the types of actions mentioned might simply be examples, and that mentioning them says nothing about whether their negative opposites would be by definition not ἐφ' ἡμῖν.⁷⁵

In *Life of Aristides* VI.6 Plutarch points out that Aristides was, among his many virtues, particularly known for his justice (δικαιοσύνη), and thus acquired the surname 'the just' (ὁ Δίκαιος). Plutarch then, as a short digression, goes on to argue, in the light of many rulers' preference for more violence-invoking surnames, that among the divine goods *incorruptibility*, *power*, and *virtue*, virtue is the most divine. The reason he gives is that while non-divine things participate in the former two, 'in justice and righteousness nothing participates except that which is divine by thinking and reasoning' (δίκης δὲ καὶ θεμιδος οὐδέν, ὅτι μὴ τῷ φρονεῖν καὶ λογίζεσθαι θεῖόν ἐστι, μεταλαγχάνει).⁷⁶ However, Plutarch remarks that:

And yet, although men are thus disposed, it is immortality, of which our nature is not capable, and power, which depends mostly on fortune, that they desire; while as for virtue, the only divine good depending on us, they put it at the bottom of the list, unwisely too, since a life passed in power and great fortune and authority needs justice to make it divine; by injustice it is made bestial.⁷⁷

The underlying picture here is the distinction between (i) what is impossible, here spelled out as that in which our nature has no part (ἡ φύσις

⁷⁵ Is Plutarch here merely referring to what he takes to be Homer's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν? I think the way Plutarch spells out the technical details here implies that he is speaking *in propria persona* as well. Most significantly, he has no objections whatsoever to the intuitions of Homer on the matter. In fact, these intuitions are probably more Plutarchian than Homeric.

⁷⁶ *Arist* 6.3.7–6.4.1. Ziegler 1969.

⁷⁷ *Arist* 6.5.1–7 Ziegler 1969: [...] ἀλλὰ καίπερ οὕτω διακείμενοι, τῆς μὲν ἀθανασίας, ἣν ἡ φύσις ἡμῶν οὐ δέχεται, καὶ τῆς δυνάμεως, ἥς ἐν τῇ τύχῃ κεῖται τὸ πλεῖστον, ἐπιθυμοῦσι, τὴν δ' ἀρετὴν, ὁ μόνον ἐστὶ τῶν θεῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν, ἐν ὑστέρω τίθενται, κακῶς φρονούντες, ὥς τὸν ἐν δυνάμει καὶ τύχῃ μεγάλη καὶ ἀρχῇ βίον ἢ μὲν δικαιοσύνη ποιεῖ θεῖον, ἢ δ' ἀδικία θηριώδη. [...]. Flacelière & Chambry 1969, 15 correctly point out what is probably Plutarch's general point here (even though it is not explicit): 'c'est donc par la justice et par la vertu que les hommes devraient surtout s'efforcer de ressembler aux dieux, alors que la plupart d'entre eux souhaitent plutôt posséder l'immortalité ou le pouvoir'.

ἡμῶν οὐ δέχεται), e.g. immortality, (ii) what depends on chance (ἐν τῇ τύχῃ κείται), e.g. power, and (iii) what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, e.g. virtue.

However, the significant trait of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν here is not simply that virtue is the only divine good that is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, but as an answer to in what way virtue is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, we are told that we only have part in virtue, (e.g. justice, and righteousness) when, or in so far as, we are divine 'by thinking and reasoning' (τῷ φρονεῖν καὶ λογίζεσθαι). The notion here might thus seem to be one in which something becomes ἐφ' ἡμῖν by our thinking and reasoning. However, saying that one thing is ἐφ' ἡμῖν if and only if we think and reason does not entail that all things ἐφ' ἡμῖν are ἐφ' ἡμῖν if and only if we think and reason. The way virtue is said to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν here is presumably only one way in which something can be ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and the fact that it is ἐφ' ἡμῖν to 'think and reason' and thus attain virtue, does not imply that an action cannot be ἐφ' ἡμῖν unless it involves that we 'think and reason'. What we get here is a description of how we attain virtue, not a condition for anything to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν also occurs in some fragments. It figures in a passage (correctly) not taken to be by Plutarch,⁷⁸ and again in a fragment which as a whole is regarded as not being by Plutarch.⁷⁹ The latter, though perhaps not by Plutarch, at least makes the familiar distinction between what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν and what happens on account of chance, and which moreover depicts it in terms of its unclarity (τύχης ἀδήλου [...] χάριν), and the effects of chance here include good birth (εὐγένεια), defined as old wealth or old reputation (παλαιὸς πλοῦτος ἢ παλαιὰ δόξα), which corresponds quite well with what we get in *Quaestiones Convivales* IX.5, where 'different kinds of upbringing and society' were given as examples of what depends on chance.

To conclude, then, what we find in Plutarch is what we have called an inclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, in that the class of things ἐφ' ἡμῖν includes things being ἐφ' ἡμῖν independently of whether we deliberate

⁷⁸ The fragment thought to be Plutarch's comments on Hesiod's *OD* 707–708, (*Fr.* 86 Sandbach) and reads Hesiod as saying that our relation to each other *according to nature* is more valuable than the one *κατὰ προαίρεσιν*. The explanation is that the latter depends on us (is ἐφ' ἡμῖν) to give up, while the bond of the former is imposed by τὸ πᾶν in order to firmly preserve it. Sandbach (*ad loc.*) is right in that this paragraph probably does not derive from Plutarch, (though the rest of the fragment might) given that, as we have seen above, the terminology of τὸ πᾶν is absent in Plutarch's discussions of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν elsewhere. The formula *κατὰ προαίρεσιν*, though quite common in other writers, is never used elsewhere in Plutarch, (though used four times in the *Ps.-Plut. De fato*).

⁷⁹ Cf. *Fr.* 139 Sandbach. (=Stob. IV.29.21 (5, 708 H.)=Ps.-Plut. *De nobilitate* c.10).

about them or not. Nor does Plutarch's notion involve ascribing to the agent anything like a capacity to do or choose otherwise. The issue for Plutarch in the relevant passages is to defend the autonomy of human agency, and for this to be achieved in Plutarch's view, it suffices, to isolate a class of things for which *we* are the only causes (αἰτίαι), i.e. rather than fate (εἰμασμένη) or chance (τύχη). Plutarch's position is particularly interesting since it clearly contradicts the attempt within what is called the standard Middle-Platonist account of fate and τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν,⁸⁰ of saving a version of the fate principle that all things happen in accordance with fate. Plutarch is perfectly happy with excluding some things, in fact both what is ἐφ' ἡμῶν and what happens by chance (τύχη), from the realm of fate, and in the relevant passages discussed above he makes no effort to argue that fate 'in some sense' includes these latter things as well.

5.5. *The standard Middle-Platonist notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν*

As was stated above, it is usually thought that there was a common Middle-Platonist position on fate and τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν and thus on the relation between them. The basis for thinking so is that several sources of Middle-Platonism contain common elements on the topic. The main sources of this theory are Ps.-Plutarch's *De fato*, Nemesius of Emesa's *De natura hominis*, and Calcidius' *In Timaeum*. We also find a version of it, though with some elements missing, in Alcinous' *Didascalicus*,⁸¹ and usually it is thought that we find it in Apuleius' *De Platone* as well. Infact, we find some elements of it in Maximus of Tyre's *Orations*. The theory of fate to which these sources refer is taken to have been composed during the first half of the second century.⁸²

In the fate debate one main issue was the scope of fate. The perhaps most significant idea in the sources of the Middle-Platonist theory of fate then concerns the scope of fate. The idea is that all things are included in fate, but among things *included in fate* some are *fated*, i.e. they *follow from fate* and are necessary, others are not fated, and not necessary.

⁸⁰ On which, see below.

⁸¹ Bobzien 1998b, 146–152, who briefly analyzes the three main sources, includes: Alcinous' *Did.* Ch. 26; Ps.-Plutarch's *De fato* passim; Nemesius' *NH* 110, 125–126; Calcidius' *Tim.* 142–187; Apuleius' *Plat.* 1.12, and adds: 'perhaps an echo in Alex. *Mant.* Ch. 25 183Cf'.

⁸² Gercke 1886, followed by Moraux, 1984, II, 495–496 and Bobzien 1998b, 147f.

The things included in fate but not fated are dealt with in a special section in the sources.⁸³ For our present purposes, what is interesting about this class of things is that it contains that which depends on us (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν). As has been pointed out, the details of this account seem to be based not on Platonic material, but on several Aristotelian texts on that which is 'not necessary'.⁸⁴ What we find is thus a Platonist account that employs and elaborates Aristotle's tentative ontological and causal account of mainly τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν in *EN* III.3. The Aristotelian elements have thus been employed to spell out the technical details of the hypothetical conception of fate. This is fairly natural, given the lack of such detail in the Platonic passages that gave rise to it. Still, as we will see further on, not all sources discussing the Middle-Platonist conception of fate and τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, on the one hand, and what is perhaps suitably called the taxonomy of modal notions based on Aristotle's *EN* remarks, on the other, make the explicit connection between the two, and there are quite a few dissimilarities between the different versions of the theory.⁸⁵

5.5.1. *The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in Alcinous' Didascalicus*

The *Didascalicus* was probably written sometime during the second century AD.⁸⁶ The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν we encounter in the *Didascalicus* is particularly interesting, since the disposition of the work is that of an introductory schoolbook (to contemporary Platonism rather than to Plato). This gives us reasons to believe that it presents an established Platonist use of the terminology in general. As for the relation of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν to εἰμασμένῃ, it reveals an attempt of systematizing terminology

⁸³ Nemesius, *Nat. Hom.* 103–104 Morani; Ps.-Plutarch, *De fato* 570 f.-572 f.; Calcidius, *Tim.* 155–156. acc. to Bobzien 1998b, 147.

⁸⁴ Cf. Bobzien 1998b, 147.

⁸⁵ This study evidently is not the place for any complete commentary or comprehensive analysis of these works as a whole. Instead I will, as before, only emphasize those aspects of each work that are directly relevant to my interpretation of it. In general, though, I give references to literature where such comprehensive commentaries can be found.

⁸⁶ I refer to this work by the Latin title *Didascalicus*, which seems to be the most common way, although some prefer *Didaskalikos*, e.g. Dillon 1993. All references are to the text of Whittaker 1990. On the the date of composition, the authorship, and arguments against identifying the author Alcinous with the known middle-platonist Albinus, cf. Dillon 1993, *preface* & ix–xiii; Whittaker 1990, vii–xiii. Also, Bobzien 1998b, 154, n. 32, and Göransson 1995, *passim*.

and doctrines, and of spelling out in detail a more independent Platonist account than we get through the Plutarchian tri-partition of causes discussed above. In the light of other sources of the standard Middle-Platonist theory, however, it still lacks some elements, and does not have the same disposition, in approaching the subject.⁸⁷

The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν first occurs in ch. II, on the two lives, i.e. the contemplative and the practical. Alcinous states that wisdom (φρόνησις) somehow consists of an assimilation to the divine,⁸⁸ and continues:

for this reason such a state would be of priority, valuable, most desirable and most proper to us, both free of hindrance and placed depending on us and cause of the end set before us.⁸⁹

There is a particular ambiguity as to the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν here. If we take the point about wisdom (φρόνησις) to be that (i) what we do while *being* in that state is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, is the point then that (ii) attaining that state, *becoming* assimilated to God (the ὁμοίωσις θεῷ) *as such* is ἐφ' ἡμῖν? We cannot decide between (i) and (ii) from the way the other attributes are ascribed to the subject τὸ τοιοῦτον.⁹⁰ However, a hint to the solution is given in the sentence following this statement, where the difference between contemplation and action is emphasized:

The action, however, and what involves action, being carried out by the body, can be hindered and one would then act, when the circumstances demand, transferring into the habits of humans, what one has seen in the theoretical life.⁹¹

This view of action (πρᾶξις), which takes the fact that action is subject to hindrance by its dependence on the body as one of the features distinguishing it from contemplation in the state of wisdom (φρόνησις),

⁸⁷ This might just seem natural if the *Didascalicus* is only a schoolbook covering many subjects, while the other sources, e.g. Nemesius, *Nat. Hom.*, Calcidius' *In Tm.* and Ps. Plutarch's *De fato* are more specialized, but as we will see, the account of the issue in *Did.* on some points might even be said to disagree with the other three sources.

⁸⁸ On the sources for this doctrine of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ (naturally inspired by *Theaet.* 176b1), cf. Whittaker 1990, 77, n. 23.

⁸⁹ *Did.* 153.9–12: [...] ὅθεν καὶ προηγούμενον καὶ τίμιον ἂν εἴη τὸ τοιοῦτον καὶ εὐκταίωτατον καὶ οἰκειότατον ἀκώλυτον τε καὶ ἐφ' ἡμῖν κείμενον καὶ τοῦ προκειμένου τέλους ἡμῖν αἴτιον. [...].

⁹⁰ Whittaker 1990, 76–78, although pointing out the large number of Stoic technical notions in the chapter, does not mention ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

⁹¹ *Did.* 153.12–15: [...] Ἡ μέντοι πρᾶξις καὶ τὸ πρακτικὸν διὰ τοῦ σώματος περαινώμενα κωλυθῆναι τε δύνανται καὶ πράττειν ἂν ἀπαιτούντων τῶν πραγμάτων, ἃ κατὰ τὸν θεωρητικὸν βίον ὁρᾶται, μελετῆσαι εἰς ἀνθρώπων ἥθη. [...].

and also as a feature of the practical life distinguishing it from the contemplative, would seem to imply that the attribute ἐφ' ἡμῖν was only applicable to the contemplative life, i.e. to the activity of contemplation. Thus, the point made here about action would settle the previous question so that the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in relation to wisdom (φρόνησις) should be understood as referring to the fact that what we engage in, in the contemplative life—whether in the process of attaining wisdom (φρόνησις) as an end, or whether having attained it already—is unhindered and depends on us (ἀκώλυτόν τε καὶ ἐφ' ἡμῖν), whereas whatever we engage in in the practical life is *in principle* subject to hindrance (κωλυθῆναι [...] δύναται), and thus is not depending on us (ἐφ' ἡμῖν).

This seemingly, as it were internalized notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, would thus seem to share the trait with Epictetus' notion of denying that any aspects of action are ἐφ' ἡμῖν. It moreover shares the Epictetan reason for this restriction, i.e. that action is *in principle* subject to external hindrance by depending on the body. On the other hand, Alcinous never explicitly states the view that what can *in principle* be hindered is by definition not ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Moreover, there is an ambiguity as to whether the *transferring* of one's theoretical visions into one's acting, where we can assume that Alcinous thinks that the core example is a virtuous soul being expressed in virtuous action, is taken to entail that actions become *in some sense* ἐφ' ἡμῖν by being expressions of or deriving from a contemplative state or activity that is ἐφ' ἡμῖν. As we will see, the latter option in fact seems to be more compatible with Alcinous' application of the notion to action later on in the *Didascalicus*.

The notion reoccurs in ch. XXVI on fate.⁹² The context is that of the compatibility of fate with a common notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν.⁹³ The

⁹² On the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in ch. xxvi, cf. also Bobzien 1998b, 154–156.

⁹³ Dillon 1993, 34–35 unfortunately blurs the issue at stake here by speaking of 'free will' etc. Beginning in a promising way by translating τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν at *Did.* 179.7 by 'the concept of what is in our power'—though preferring 'freedom of choice' in the commentary, (p. 160)—and ἐπ' αὐτῇ at *Did.* 179.11 by 'it is in its power', he then renders ἐπ' αὐτῷ ὄντι at *Did.* 179.14 by 'this being a voluntary action of his' and finally τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν at *Did.* 179.22 and 179. 32 by 'our free will'—though wavering between 'the voluntary, or that which is in our power', 'free will', 'free will to make a choice', again 'what is in our power', and then 'the voluntary', in the commentary on these passages (pp. 163–164). Neither the concept of the voluntary (τὸ ἐκούσιον) nor the one of the will (βούλησις) are present or referred to in the chapter. Indeed, 'ἐκούσιος' occurs in *Did.* 184.40 & 42 in the discussion of the voluntariness of virtue. 'βούλησις' is never applied to the human soul or to human agents in the *Didascalicus*, though it is found in 165.1 applied to ὁ πρῶτος θεός; again in 171.23 to 'ὁ θεός'; then in 178.37 to οἱ θεοί. The verb

particular conception of fate defended as compatible with the notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν here is the one of hypothetical fate,⁹⁴ i.e. 'All things, he [Plato] says, are within the sphere of fate, but not all things are fated' (Πάντα μὲν φησιν ἐν εἰμαρμένη εἶναι, οὐ μὴν πάντα καθεμάρθαι).⁹⁵ This position acknowledges that, had everything been fated, i.e. in the sense of fate stating what will happen to any given person, 'what depends on us would vanish, and so would praise and blame and everything like that' (ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν οἰχθήσεται καὶ ἔπαινοι καὶ ψόγοι καὶ πᾶν τὸ τούτοις παραπλήσιον).⁹⁶ The idea, then, is that fate has the form of a law in the sense that it makes conditional statements, of the form: if *x* does *y*, then *z* will happen, etc. Thus, 'if a soul chooses a given type of life and performs such-and-such actions, such-and-such consequences will follow for it' (διότι ἥτις ἂν ἔληται ψυχὴ τοιοῦτον βίον καὶ τάδε τινὰ πράξει, τάδε τινὰ αὐτῇ ἔψεται).⁹⁷ The point is that this conception of fate is compatible with a common notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The conclusion drawn from the above statement is that the soul has no master and 'it depends on it *to act or not*, and *it is not compelled to this*.' (ἐπ' αὐτῇ μὲν τὸ πράξει ἢ μή· καὶ οὐ κατηνάγκασται τοῦτο).⁹⁸

Thus, what is said to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν here, is *acting or not acting*. Moreover, the Platonic reference to the 'choice of life' would seem to include choice as such in what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Our author does not explicitly say this, but rather sticks to the example of acting. Though 'the soul' being the grammatical subject in the statement might seem to somewhat blur the picture, we should distinguish the mythological, i.e. Platonic context, i.e. the one of *souls* choosing their future lives, from the 'actual context' of the points made by the author as indicated by the references

'βούλεσθαι' occurs in 163.2 applied to (human) craftsmen in the sense of 'intending to'; in 169.43 applied to 'ὁ θεός'; in 185.7 to human agents in the sense of 'wanting (to have)'; in 187.11 applied to human agents in the sense of "intending"; and in 189.14 to the sophist in the sense of 'wishing'. 'θελεῖν' is only used once, in 181.28, applied to humans (though in a quote from Plato). None of these uses have any connotations of 'a faculty of will' or of 'acts of the will'. Consequently, there is no issue of a 'free will' in the *Didascalicus*. For the interpretation of Alcinoüs' use of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν as 'free will' cf. Dillon 1993, XXI–XXII; 160–164.

⁹⁴ Here, of course, ascribed to Plato, though obviously an interpretation made possible only by the later Hellenistic debates.

⁹⁵ *Did.* 179.2–3.

⁹⁶ *Did.* 179.7–8.

⁹⁷ *Did.* 179.8–10.

⁹⁸ *Did.* 179.11–12.

to praise and blame.⁹⁹ This rather more practical context is also hinted at by the examples given, i.e. Paris *stealing* Helen as an action depending on him (οἷον τῷ Πάρις ἀρπάσει τὴν Ἑλένην, ἐπ' αὐτῷ ὄντι),¹⁰⁰ and Laius *begetting* a son.¹⁰¹ Thus, when we read the points made about τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν as referring to the latter context, there seems to be no reason to think that *choice* would be among what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

Now, if we have established that it is action that is said to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν, there is still an ambiguity as to what this implies. On the whole, there is actually nothing here that demands or actually indicates that in a given situation, an agent would have a possibility to do otherwise than he does. Rather, the point made is one about autonomy, i.e. that it is the agent, as opposed to external factors, that determines his actions. The addition of the statement that the soul's doing or not doing what it does *is not compelled* (καὶ οὐ κατηνάγκασται τοῦτο) might seem like a new, additional condition, i.e. as if there was some indeterminacy about what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, in addition to the absence of fatedness. However, we should rather take it as a rephrasing or underlining of the point that the antecedent of the conditional relation, which is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, is not fated, i.e. not compelled by fate, though being within the sphere of fate (ἐν εἰμαρμένῃ), as opposed to the consequent which is both within the sphere of fate (ἐν εἰμαρμένῃ) and fated, i.e. compelled by fate (καθεμιμάσθαι;¹⁰² καθεἰμαρταί;¹⁰³ καθ' εἰμαρμένην συντελεσθήσεται).¹⁰⁴

Then, in the paragraph that follows these remarks, Alcinous goes on to locate τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν within 'what is possible' (τὸ δυνατόν), which is defined as having a nature that falls somehow between the true and the false, and, being by nature undetermined, it is as it were, the medium of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν.¹⁰⁵ The point made here is soon explained as meaning that whatever happens when we have chosen it, this will then be either true or false (ὃ δ' ἂν ἐλομένων ἡμῶν γένηται, τοῦτο ἔσται ἢ ἀληθὲς ἢ ψεῦδος).¹⁰⁶ In other words, what is possible, being undefined, turns out to be true or not, with respect to what depends on us, according to

⁹⁹ *Did.* 179.7–8: [...] ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν οἰχθήσεται καὶ ἔπαινοι καὶ ψόγοι καὶ πᾶν τὸ τοῦτοις παραπλήσιον [...].

¹⁰⁰ *Did.* 179.13–15.

¹⁰¹ *Did.* 179.15–19.

¹⁰² *Did.* 179.3.

¹⁰³ *Did.* 179.19.

¹⁰⁴ *Did.* 179.12–13.

¹⁰⁵ *Did.* 179.20–22.

¹⁰⁶ *Did.* 179. 22–23.

either direction of our impulse (ἀορισταῖνον δὲ τῷ ἐφ' ἡμῖν κατὰ τὴν ἐφ' ὁπότερον ὅποιον λαμβάνει τὸ ἀληθεύειν ἢ μή.).¹⁰⁷ Now, it might seem that the phrase 'when we have chosen' (ἐλομένων ἡμῶν) would imply that Alcinous is primarily applying the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν to choice, i.e. (given the verb used here) to αἵρεσις. However, there are no indications of any theory of a capacity of choice in the *Didascalicus*,¹⁰⁸ nor of choice being ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Moreover, we should in this case, just as above, distinguish the present context, indicated by the examples of actions, from the original Platonic context of *souls* choosing their future lives. The reference here to our choosing something possible, making it true or false, should then rather be taken to mean our choosing to do it, by doing it. This looser sense is also indicated by the last phrase, rather depicting τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν as a matter of *our impulse* taking this direction or that (τῷ ἐφ' ἡμῖν κατὰ τὴν ἐφ' ὁπότερον ὅποιον).

The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν also occurs in ch. XXXI, on the voluntariness of virtue and involuntariness of vice. It is stated that:

[F]urthermore, since, if there is anything that depends on us and has no master, and virtue is such a thing (for what is noble would not have been praised, if it came about by nature or by some divine influence), then virtue would also be voluntary, consisting in some ardent, and excellent, and lasting impulse.¹⁰⁹

The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν here is such that the following holds (reminding us of Aristotle's use in *EN* III.1): if *x* depends on us (is ἐφ' ἡμῖν), then *x* is voluntary (ἐκούσιον). The notion is here moreover explained within the

¹⁰⁷ *Did.* 179.31–33. There is also the possibility of taking the τῷ ἐφ' ἡμῖν here to be 'by what depends on us', but then the statement would seem to imply that the class of τὸ δυνατόν and of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν were co-extensive, i.e. all things possible depending on us. Perhaps this is how Dillon, *ad loc.* understands it in translating, along the lines of his free-will interpretation of the notion, as follows: 'The possible, however, is none of these, but remains indefinite, and takes on truth or falsity in consequence of the inclination in either direction of our free will'.

¹⁰⁸ The term 'αἵρεσις' never occurs in *Did.* Except for the uses here in ch. XXVI (*Did.* 179.9 & 22). The verb 'αἵρεῖν' is used in 184.44 in relation to the voluntariness of virtue, but only in a Plato quote (or paraphrase), i.e. in a reference, and then in 188.5 in the sense of 'acquiring, taking'. The form 'αἵρετός' occurs at 181.6 in the sense of 'choiceworthy'. The verb 'προσαιρεῖσθαι' occurs at 164.14–15 applied to humans, but in a rather loose sense of 'trying to, proposing to' and 'προαιρετικός' at 189.6 in the same sense, i.e. 'trying to, aiming at'.

¹⁰⁹ *Did.* 184.37–42: [...] 'Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ εἴ τι ἄλλο ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἐστι καὶ ἀδέσποτον, καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ τοιοῦτον ὑπάρχει (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν ἐπαινετὸν ἦν τὸ καλόν, εἰ ἐκ φύσεως ἢ τινος θείας μοίρας παρεγίνετο), καὶ ἐκούσιον ἂν εἴη ἡ ἀρετή, καθ' ὁρμὴν τινα συνισταμένη διάπυρον καὶ γενναίαν καὶ ἔμμονον. [...].

parentheses, namely that something depending on us does not depend on anything external to us, such as nature or god. The point made is thus one about autonomy, and it is linked to praise and blame, I take it, in the following way: some x being ἐφ' ἡμῶν is a necessary and sufficient condition for x being ἐξούσιον and x being ἐξούσιον is a necessary and sufficient condition¹¹⁰ for x being praised or praiseworthy (ἐπαινετόν), and virtue being ἐφ' ἡμῶν thus justifies its being ἐπαινετόν. Now, given the actual example, we may ask in what sense is virtue said to be ἐφ' ἡμῶν? Is it the acquisition of virtue or acting virtuously as expression of one's virtuous character? The immediately following remark on the involuntariness of vice implies that both acquiring and thus having virtue were taken to be voluntary above, and thus both were ἐφ' ἡμῶν. As for action, i.e. the expression of acquired virtue, though there is no explicit statement that virtuous actions are voluntary and thus are ἐφ' ἡμῶν too, this would be implied by the context. The line taken in the chapter moreover does not seem to exclude the possibility of other actions than virtuous actions being voluntary and thus ἐφ' ἡμῶν.

In ch. XXXII, on passions, it is stated that passions are not ἐφ' ἡμῶν:

[T]hey come about in the affective part of the soul (...) and our work, nor do they depend on us. For they often come about in us involuntarily and despite our resistance.¹¹¹

Now, whatever view we opt for as to the *lacuna* here, it seems obvious, especially in the light of the following acknowledgement of passions being often involuntary, implying that in these cases passions are not ἐφ' ἡμῶν either; that Alcinous here states that passions are not ἐφ' ἡμῶν. This would hold in one sense even if it were the case that though often not coming about through something that is ἐφ' ἡμῶν, they sometimes do. The point could still be that since they *can* be externally induced, they are in principle not ἐφ' ἡμῶν.

So, to conclude then, in ch. II of the *Didascalicus*, on the two lives, the association of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν with the contemplative life of

¹¹⁰ This might seem odd, but there is a slight asymmetry in Alcinous' account here. One might think, given the origin of the terminology here, i.e. Aristotle's *EN* III.1, that x being ἐξούσιον is a necessary but *not* a sufficient condition for x being praised or praiseworthy (ἐπαινετόν), since some things, e.g. bad actions, would seem to be ἐξούσιον, though never praised or praiseworthy (ἐπαινετόν).

¹¹¹ *Did.* 185.29–32: [...] ἐν γὰρ τῷ παθητικῷ τῆς ψυχῆς συνίσταται (...) καὶ τὰ ἡμέτερα ἔργα οὐδὲ ἐφ' ἡμῶν. Ἀκούσι γοῦν ἐν ἡμῶν ἐγγίνεται πολλάκις καὶ ἀντιτείνουσιν [...]. On the *lacuna* and alternative emendations, cf. Dillon 1993, 194.

wisdom (φρόνησις) (being ἀκώλυτόν τε καὶ ἐφ' ἡμῖν) and the negative depiction of action and practical matters (Ἡ προᾶξις καὶ τὸ πρακτικόν) as subject to obstruction (κωλυθῆναι [...] δύναται), seem to imply a notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in which only what cannot be hindered is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and all things which can in principle be hindered are not ἐφ' ἡμῖν. This internalized and restrictive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν seems to differ from the one in ch. XXVI on fate, where instead we learn that it depends on the soul to act or not, and that this is not forced (ἐπ' αὐτῇ μὲν τὸ προᾶξαι ἢ μὴ καὶ οὐ κατηνάγκασται τοῦτο). In the latter case, there is no trace of the position that things (e.g. actions) that are in principle hinderable by definition cannot be ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Then, the use in ch. XXXI, on the voluntariness of virtue and involuntariness of vice, seems to be compatible with either of the above understandings of the notion, i.e. either the restrictive one, if the statement that virtue is ἐφ' ἡμῖν is taken to refer to the acquisition and being in that state as such, or with the notion including action, if the statement is rather taken to mean that every virtuous action (at least) is as ἐφ' ἡμῖν as the state of virtue, by deriving from it. Finally, the statement in ch. XXXII on passions, that passions are not ἐφ' ἡμῖν, is compatible with either the exclusive or the inclusive interpretation as well. Given Alcinous' generally exclusive conception of action as an activity of the *rational* soul,¹¹² it is fully conceivable that the acting or not acting is ἐφ' ἡμῖν while whether a passion comes about in us or not, is not ἐφ' ἡμῖν.¹¹³ Thus, the strongest tendency in the *Didascalicus* is towards an exclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, which goes together with a pessimistic attitude towards on the one hand passions and the actions following from these, and on the other hand action in general as being subject to external hindrance.

5.5.2. *The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Ps.-Plutarch's De fato*

The *De fato*, which is not by Plutarch, but perhaps correctly ascribed to the Athenian school of a later period,¹¹⁴ is addressed to a 'Piso' who allegedly has asked the author for an account of his views on fate. The

¹¹² As defined in opposition to contemplation in ch. II, *Did.* 153.2–5: [...] Ὅστι τοίνυν ἡ θεωρία ἐνέργεια τοῦ νοῦ νοοῦντος τὰ νοητά, ἡ δὲ προᾶξις ψυχῆς λογικῆς ἐνέργεια διὰ σώματος γινομένη. [...].

¹¹³ Such a view would moreover correspond to what we found in the passage from Philo of Alexandria's *De Mutatione Nominum*, discussed above.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Dillon, 1977, 208; 320ff. De Lacy-Einarson 1959, 304 states that the theory in the treatise was 'possibly by Gaius', and that the treatise 'was probably not written

treatise includes most elements of the standard Middle-Platonist theory of fate. Basically this theory states that fate is hypothetical in a sense similar to how a political law is hypothetical,¹¹⁵ amounting to the point that all things are included in fate, but not all are fated. The author reveals his Platonist affiliations by assuming the task to include saving if not the words yet the intention behind the canonic Platonic passages taken to refer to fate. However, as mentioned above, the taxonomy in which what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν is situated derives from Aristotelian texts.

The treatise includes a section on what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν.¹¹⁶ The section has a central place in the account, and it is evident that it forms part of the central phenomena that the author assumes have to be dealt with in a theory of fate. At the beginning of the section spelling out the details of the law-like hypothetical conception of fate, the general objective is stated by the author as being to determine not only how fate relates to providence, but how it relates to chance (ἡ τύχη), to that which depends on us (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν), and to the contingent (τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον).¹¹⁷ Further ahead, in the light of the hypothetical view of fate, the objective is reformulated as being to state how that which depends on us (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν), and chance (ἡ τύχη), the possible (τὸ δυνατόν) and the contingent (τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον) when classed as *antecedents*, might be themselves *saved*, and to save fate (as consequences) as well.¹¹⁸ The preliminary formulation of the solution is that while fate includes all things (ἡ μὲν γὰρ εἰμαρμένη πάντα περιέχει),¹¹⁹ some things do not happen by necessity but each according to how it has naturally come

before the first decades of the second century'. De Lacy-Einarson, though acknowledging that it is 'what is in our power' that is proven to be non-fated etc. 1959, 306, repeatedly 1959, 303–309, state that the aim of the author is accounting for 'free will' in relation to providence. At 335, n. c., they even introduce a distinction between 'free will (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν)' and 'the things which we are free to do (τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν)'. Ps.-Plutarch never makes use of such a distinction, though.

¹¹⁵ Fate as having the quality of a political law is introduced at *De fato* 569.D.4ff., and worked out in detail at 570.A.6ff. Sieveking.

¹¹⁶ *De fato* 571.C.4–E.2. The notion occurs at *De fato* 570.B.9; 570.E.6; 570.F.3; 570.F.4; 570.F.5; 571.C.9; 571.D.2; 571.D.3; 571.D.7; 571.D.9; 571.D.11; 571.E.3; 572.D.3; 572.E.2; 572.E.11; 574.B.6; 574.D.9. Sieveking.

¹¹⁷ *De fato* 570.B.7–9 Sieveking: [...] πῶς μὲν πρὸς τὴν πρόνοιαν ἡ εἰμαρμένη ἔχει, πῶς δὲ πρὸς τὴν τύχην καὶ τὸ γ' ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα [...]. De Lacy-Einarson emendates τε for γε at 570.B.9.

¹¹⁸ *De fato* 570.E.6–9 Sieveking: [...] ὁητέον, ὡς τὸ γ' ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ ἡ τύχη τὸ τε δυνατόν καὶ τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον καὶ τὰ τούτων συγγενῇ ταχθέντα ἐν τοῖς προηγουμένοις αὐτὰ τε σφίζουσιν ἂν καὶ τὴν εἰμαρμένην σφίξοι. [...].

¹¹⁹ *De fato* 570.E.9–10. Sieveking.

to be. (τὰ δ' οὐκ ἐξ ἀνάγκης γενήσεται, ἀλλ' ἕκαστον αὐτῶν οἷον καὶ πέφυκεν εἶναι).¹²⁰ In order to explain what the solution consists in and to prove that it does save what it ought to save, the author gives an account,¹²¹ notion by notion, of the possible (τὸ δυνατόν), the contingent (τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον), that which depends on us (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν), and chance (ἡ τύχη) and how these all relate to each other. The account given is then that among things possible (τὰ δυνατόα), some are necessary (τὰ ἀναγκαῖα), i.e. they cannot be hindered,¹²² and some are contingent (τὰ ἐνδεχόμενα), i.e. they do allow their contrary. The contingent things (τὰ ἐνδεχόμενα) fall into three classes, namely what happens for the most part (ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ),¹²³ what happens for the lesser part (ἐπ' ἑλαττον),¹²⁴ and what happens in equal parts and as it happens (ἐπίσης καὶ ὁπότερον ἔτυχε).¹²⁵ The two former classes are opposed to each other, and these things mostly depend on nature. What is of the third class is instead opposed to itself,¹²⁶ and depends on us.¹²⁷ The point that is relevant to our present purposes here is then that all things ἐφ' ἡμῖν belong to the third class of contingents (ἐνδεχόμενα), i.e. what happens in equal parts. The basic opposition within the contingent is the one between what obeys nature (τῇ φύσει ... ὑποτέτακται),¹²⁸ and what obeys human impulse, which is what is said to depend on us and to be according to choice (τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ ὁρμῇ ὑποτέτακται, ὃ δὲ ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ κατὰ προαίρεσιν λέγεται).¹²⁹ Here, the point is made that what depends on us

¹²⁰ *De fato* 570.E.10–F.2 Sieveking. It is quite obvious that 'by necessity' (ἐξ ἀνάγκης) is here used in the sense of 'by a cause external to the nature of the thing in question.'

¹²¹ *De fato* 570.F.2 ff. Sieveking.

¹²² *De fato* 571.B.1–6 Sieveking: [...] τῶν δὲ δυνατῶν τὰ μὲν οὐκ ἂν κωλυθεῖν ποτέ, [...] τὰ μὲν οὖν πρότερον ὥς ἐξ ἀνάγκης γινόμενον ἀναγκαῖα προσαγορεύεται. [...].

¹²³ *De fato* 571.C.5 Sieveking.

¹²⁴ *De fato* 571.C.5 Sieveking.

¹²⁵ *De fato* 571.C.6 Sieveking. As De Lacy-Einarson- 1959, 332 note, the same threefold division of the contingent is found in Ammonius (*In Aristot. De Int. Comm.* Ch. ix 142.1–5) who explicitly states that the phrase ὁπότερον ἔτυχε is applied only to the ἐπ' ἴσης (143.3–143.4 Busse: τοῦτο μόνον τὸ εἶδος τοῦ ἐνδεχομένου καλεῖται ὁπότερον ἔτυχε).

¹²⁶ The 'opposition' simply means that e.g. if 'it is raining' is for the most part, then 'it is not raining' will be for the lesser part, and if 'it is cloudy' happens in equal parts, then 'it is not cloudy' will also happen in equal parts.

¹²⁷ *De fato* 571.C.6–9 Sieveking: [...] τοῦτο μὲν φανερόν ὥς αὐτὸ αὐτῷ ἀντιτέτακται, τὸ δὲ ὥς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ καὶ ἐπ' ἑλαττον ἀλλήλοις καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ἐπὶ τῇ φύσει τὸ πλεῖστον, ἐφ' ἡμῖν δὲ τὸ ἐπίσης. [...].

¹²⁸ *De fato* 571.C.11 Sieveking.

¹²⁹ *De fato* 571.D.1–3 Sieveking. This is the way Hani 1980, *ad loc.*, understands the sentence, while unexplicably De Lacy-Einarson 1959, *ad loc.* paraphrase 'and what is under its control is said to lie in our power and be a matter of choice'.

is a more general class with two subclasses, namely, both what happens by passion and rage or desire and what happens by calculation and reason, which one could say is according to choice (τό τ' ἐκ πάθους καὶ θυμοῦ ἢ ἐπιθυμίας τό τ' ἐξ ἐπιλογισμοῦ ἢ διανοίας, ὅπερ ἤδη κατὰ προαίρεσιν ἄν τις εἴποι).¹³⁰

Then another point of terminology follows, namely, that it is reasonable (to grant) that the kind of possible and contingent which has been called 'according to impulse and depending on us' is not said in the same way in a different context, since regarding what lies in the future (one says) 'possible and contingent', and as regards the present 'depending on us and according to impulse'.¹³¹ The author suggests the definitions that 'the contingent is what is both itself possible and also its opposite, what depends on us is the one of the parts of the contingent which is already occurring in conformity with our impulse'.¹³²

The last point is interesting for the following reason. What the author said previously seemed to reflect a notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν according to which there is a specific sub-class of the contingent, of things that are in a way by their nature ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Here the author instead shifts to a notion according to which we only say that something contingent is ἐφ' ἡμῖν when it is *already* happening in conformity with our own impulse, presumably also implying that we say so concerning past events as well.

What we find in the *De fato* then, is what seems to be an oscillation between two notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. On the one hand we find the attempt, in the light of the common Middle-Platonist hypothetical view of fate, to state how that which depends on us (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν), and chance (ἡ

¹³⁰ *De fato* 571.D.4–6 Sieveking. Though neither Hani or De Lacy-Einarson seem to translate in this way, I think that the three steps of presenting the slogan-like phrase 'ὁ δὲ ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ κατὰ προαίρεσιν λέγεται' (571.D.2–3), then correcting it stating that 'γενικώτερον δὲ μᾶλλον τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν' (571.D.3) and then presenting the proper way to use the terms 'τό τ' ἐξ ἐπιλογισμοῦ ἢ διανοίας, ὅπερ ἤδη κατὰ προαίρεσιν ἄν τις εἴποι' (571.D.5–6), might well indicate that the author introduces a new notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, i.e. one that has to be spelled out in detail to 'Piso' or any other intended reader. If this is the case, we can assume that the use which is being modified, presumably one identifying τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν with what is κατὰ προαίρεσιν, is a Platonist one as well, since there is no sign of criticism of any rival school.

¹³¹ *De fato* 571.D.6–10 Sieveking: [...] ἔχει δὲ λόγον μὴ τὸ δυνατόν καὶ ἐνδεχόμενον τοῦτο, ὅπερ καθ' ὁρμὴν καὶ ἐφ' ἡμῖν εἴρηται, [μὴ] τὸ αὐτὸ κατ' ἄλλο λέγεται κατὰ μὲν γὰρ τὸ μέλλον δυνατόν τε καὶ ἐνδεχόμενον, κατὰ δὲ τὸ παρὸν ἐφ' ἡμῖν τε καὶ καθ' ὁρμὴν. [...].

¹³² *De fato* 571.D.10–E2 Sieveking: [...] ἀφορίζοιτο δ' ἂν ὧδε· τὸ μὲν ἐνδεχόμενον ὅπερ αὐτό τε καὶ τὸ ἀντιζείμενον, τὸ δ' ἐφ' ἡμῖν θάτερον μέρος τοῦ ἐνδεχομένου τοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν ὁρμὴν ἤδη γινόμενον. [...].

τύχη), the possible (τό δυνατόν) and the contingent (τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον) can be seen as antecedents, and fate as their consequences. In this context, things that are ἐφ' ἡμῖν are taken to form a subclass of what is possible and contingent, a subclass characterized as what happens in equal parts and as it happens (ἐπίσης καὶ ὁπότερον ἔτυχε).¹³³ On the other hand, we also find what seems like an additional restriction on this use, namely that what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν is rather that 'which is already occurring in conformity with our impulse.'

5.5.3. *The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Nemeseius of Emesa's De natura hominis*

Nemesius probably wrote the *NH* sometime around AD 390–400.¹³⁴ The treatise gives a Christian anthropology much on the basis of Pagan philosophy. This objective is probably an explanation of Nemesius sometimes adopting such Pagan theories without mentioning the origin, but sometimes explicitly giving a hint as to its originator, especially when something opposes his view.¹³⁵

Thus, the relevant parts of the section situating the notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν within an account of fate is ascribed directly to Plato, while the part situating τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν within a taxonomy of modal notions is not ascribed to any school in particular, but rather presented as something defended by Nemesius himself.

The part situating the notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν within an account of fate, then, contains a section bearing the title *On how Plato says (or talks about) fate*.¹³⁶ The section shares many of the elements of the standard Middle-Platonist theory of fate.¹³⁷ Hence, providence is not identical to fate, but 'fate is comprised by providence, since everything in accordance with fate also happens according to providence, but not everything in accordance with providence is also according to fate'.¹³⁸ fate encompasses everything, but in two different ways; some things

¹³³ *De fato* 571.C.6 Sieveking.

¹³⁴ Cf. Verbeke & Moncho 1975, V & Telfer 1955, p. 206.

¹³⁵ I.e. revealing disagreements with Pagan philosophers would presumably be less controversial than revealing agreements with them.

¹³⁶ *NH* 109.9 Morani: *Περὶ τοῦ πῶς λέγει Πλάτων τὴν εἰμαρμένην*.

¹³⁷ At *NH* 135–136 Morani, we also get a brief statement focused rather on 'Plato's' view of providence (πρόνοια). For an analysis of the Middle-Platonist theory of providence in *NH*, cf. Sharples 2003.

¹³⁸ *NH* 109.16–18 Morani: [...] ἀπὸ γὰρ τῆς προνοίας ἐμπεριέχεσθαι τὴν εἰμαρμένην πᾶν γὰρ τὸ καθ' εἰμαρμένην καὶ κατὰ πρόνοιαν γίνεσθαι οὐ μὴ πᾶν τὸ κατὰ πρόνοιαν καὶ καθ' εἰμαρμένην εἶναι. [...].

qua hypothesis (τὰ μὲν καθ' ὑπόθεσιν) others as following *from hypothesis* (τὰ δὲ ἐξ ὑποθέσεως).¹³⁹ Thus, fate 'encompasses the initial causes just like some principles, *qua hypothesis*, i.e. the things which depend on us, assents, judgments, impulses, but the things necessarily following from these as following *from hypothesis*'.¹⁴⁰ Perhaps most significantly, 'moreover the choice, depending on us, of the actions, is *qua hypothesis* [encompassed by fate]. And when the things that depend on us are set forth as hypotheses, from these things themselves, just like from a hypothesis, the things fated follow'.¹⁴¹

As we said above, the section supposedly situating τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν within a taxonomy of modal notions is not ascribed to any school in particular but simply presented as something defended by Nemesius himself. Notably, the reference in the discussion of fate above, to the account of choice and objects of deliberation, which is the subject of the section where the taxonomy of modal notions is discussed, does not imply that Nemesius took the taxonomy to be a particularly Platonic position but rather his own view, or the view one ought to have on the issue. The account is given in a section bearing the title *On the Things Which We Deliberate About*.¹⁴² The section, like the preceding ones, entirely follows Aristotle's discussion in *EN* III, both as to the disposition and the examples given, as well as to the points made. However, all of a sudden we first get a number of terminological points about how 'what is capable' (δυνάμενον), 'capacity' (δύναμις), and 'the possible' (δυνατόν) relate to one another.¹⁴³ Following these remarks, we get a taxonomy of modal notions.¹⁴⁴ Thus we learn that among things that are possible, some are necessary (ἀναγκαῖα)—defined as 'things which are impossible to hinder, or of which the opposite is impossible'¹⁴⁵—and others are contingent (ἐνδεχόμενα)—defined as 'what it is possible to hinder, or of

¹³⁹ *NH* 109.19–20ff. Morani.

¹⁴⁰ *NH* 109.20–23 Morani: [...] τὰς μὲν γὰρ προηγουμένας αἰτίας ὥσπερ τινὰς ἀρχὰς καθ' ὑπόθεσιν περιέχει, ἅπερ ἐστὶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν, συγκαταθέσεις καὶ κρίσεις καὶ ὀρμαί· τὰ δὲ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ταύταις ἐπόμενα ἐξ ὑποθέσεως. [...].

¹⁴¹ *NH* 109.23–25 Morani: [...] καὶ ἐστὶν ἡ μὲν ἐφ' ἡμῖν αἴρεσις τῶν πρακτῶν καθ' ὑπόθεσιν. ὑποκειμένων δὲ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἐξ αὐτῶν τούτων, ὥσπερ ἐξ ὑποθέσεως, ἀκολουθεῖν τὰ τῆς εἰσαρμόνης. [...].

¹⁴² *NH* 101.20 *Περὶ τίνων βουλευόμεθα*.

¹⁴³ *NH* 103.10–17 Morani.

¹⁴⁴ *NH* 103.17–104.11 Morani.

¹⁴⁵ *NH* 103.16–17 Morani: [...] ἀναγκαῖα μὲν, ἅπερ ἀδύνατον κωλυθῆναι ἢ ὧν καὶ τὸ ἀντικείμενον ἀδύνατόν ἐστιν [...].

which also the opposite is possible'.¹⁴⁶ Then we learn that 'among the contingent things some are said [to be] for the most part, others for the lesser part, and others as in equal parts' (τῶν ἐνδεχομένων τὰ μὲν ὡς ἐπὶ πολὺ λέγεται, τὰ δὲ ὡς ἐπ' ἕλλατον, τὰ δὲ ὡς ἐπίσης).¹⁴⁷ The last kind of contingent things are exemplified by 'walking and not walking and generally doing something and not doing [it]'.¹⁴⁸ Moreover 'what is contingent in equal parts is the only thing we deliberate about'.¹⁴⁹ The reason is that 'the contingent in equal parts is that which we are capable of itself as well as of its opposite'.¹⁵⁰

Now, it is not stated explicitly that the things which are ἐφ' ἡμῖν are found among or are identical to the things that are contingent and happening in equal parts (τὰ ἐπίσης ἐνδεχόμενα). It might seem that this identification would follow, given that it was stated that we deliberated 'about what depends on us alone and happens through us' (περὶ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν μόνον καὶ δι' ἡμῶν γινομένων),¹⁵¹ on the one hand, and then that 'what is contingent in equal parts is the only thing we deliberate about',¹⁵² on the other. However, as the text stands, Nemeseius does not make the move—found in Ps.-Plutarch's *De fato*—of explicitly connecting the two characterizations, and it remains unclear exactly what he takes the connection to be between and τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν and τὰ ἐπίσης ἐνδεχόμενα.

5.5.4. *The notion of in nostra potestate in Calcidius' In Timaeum*

The date of composition of Calcidius' *In Timaeum* is uncertain, but it is usually placed in the 4th century AD. The work is a partial translation and commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*, and while probably composed after the period when the so-called Middle Platonists flourished, it is

¹⁴⁶ *NH* 103.20–21 Morani: [...] ἐνδεχόμενον δὲ τὸ δυνάμενον κωλυθῆναι ἢ ὧν καὶ τὸ ἀντικείμενον δυνατόν [...].

¹⁴⁷ *NH* 104.1–2 Morani.

¹⁴⁸ *NH* 104.4–5 Morani: [...] ἐπίσης δὲ τὸ περιπατῆσαι καὶ μὴ περιπατῆσαι καὶ ἀπλῶς προᾶξαι τι καὶ μὴ προᾶξαι. [...].

¹⁴⁹ *NH* 104.5–6 Morani: [...] περὶ τούτων οὖν τῶν ἐπίσης ἐνδεχομένων μόνον βουλευόμεθα [...].

¹⁵⁰ *NH* 104.6–7 Morani: [...] ἔστι δὲ ἐπίσης ἐνδεχόμενον ὃ αὐτὸ τε δυνάμεθα καὶ τὸ ἀντικείμενον αὐτῷ [...].

¹⁵¹ *NH* 102.22–23; the formula, deriving from Aristotle's *EN* III discussion, is repeated, with explications and variations throughout the page.

¹⁵² *NH* 104.5–6 Morani: [...] περὶ τούτων οὖν τῶν ἐπίσης ἐνδεχομένων μόνον βουλευόμεθα [...].

usually taken to reflect Middle-Platonist positions on several issues. Among these issues we find the compatibility of a theory of fate with ‘that which depends on us’. Fate as such is dealt with primarily in chapters 142–190, of which the latter part, chapters 176–190, is an attempt to specifically state Plato’s doctrine of fate.¹⁵³ However, Plato’s views on fate are referred to and explained from chapter 142 and onwards. We find several elements of the standard Middle-Platonist account of fate, such as the idea of threefold providence,¹⁵⁴ and the idea that fate is, in a way, the verdict of providence,¹⁵⁵ and thus the depiction of fate as a ‘divine law’.¹⁵⁶ For our present purposes, the most interesting element is the details of the account of how that which depends on us relates to fate. On this matter, Calcidius spells out Plato’s view as follows:

[A]nd it (sc. fate) includes the things which depend on us as antecedents, and it moreover includes the arrangement of judgments. Punishment and reward, which are fated, follow, as well as all such things that happen by coincidence or by chance.¹⁵⁷

The point made here is evidently a version of the standard Middle-Platonist view that fate includes all things, but some, e.g. the things which depend on us, merely as antecedents, and other things, i.e. the results—for us and others—of the antecedents, as consequences. This point is restated further ahead as well.¹⁵⁸ As to the details of the notion of ‘that which depends on us’ (*in nostra potestate*) here, Calcidius mostly rephrases this as what happens ‘through decision’ (*arbitrio*), and ‘through

¹⁵³ On the disposition of the commentary, cf. Waszink 1962, XVII–XXXV. Cf. also Den Boeft 1970.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Calcidius, *Tim.* 188.1ff. Waszink.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Calcidius, *Tim.* 189.17–18 Waszink. The talk of fate as a verdict, *scitum*, of providence, is introduced already in ch. 144.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Calcidius, *Tim.* 176.1ff.; 189.1ff. Waszink. The law-metaphor for fate, i.e. the *leges fatales*, is introduced in ch. 143 and then re-occurs throughout the account.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Calcidius, *Tim.* 189.18–20 Waszink: [...] *continet autem ea quae sunt in nostra potestate ut praecedentia, continet etiam meritorum collocationem. Sequuntur animadversio et approbatio, quae sunt fatalia, eaque omnia quae casu fortunave fiunt.* [...]. These points are made in similar terms in ch. 151.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Calcidius, *Tim.* 190.9–16 Waszink. In this final ‘conclusion’ to the section on fate, the distinctions are somewhat more sloppy, and one is given the impression that the ambition of saving the idea of the all-inclusiveness of fate, as an aspect of the fate principle that *all things happen according to fate*, which is implied by the law-metaphor, is replaced by a more clear-cut Plutarchian separation of the ‘things that depend on us’ from the ‘things that happen according to fate’. This more simple account is also visible in ch. 155. cf. also ch. 150.19.

impulse' (*voluntate*).¹⁵⁹ Also, these things are depicted as 'a motion of our souls' (*animarum nostrarum motus*), spelled out as the soul's judgment (*iudicium*), assent (*consensus*), and appetite (*appetitus*) or inclination (*declinatio*),¹⁶⁰ and in this context we actually get a sort of definition of what it means that something is *in nostra potestate*:

(things) which depend on us, since the choice—of these as much as of those which are opposites to them—lies in our hands.¹⁶¹

The statement might seem to imply that Calcidius, and the presumably Middle-Platonist view he represents, has an exclusive notion of that which depends on us, given the reference to choice (*optio*). However, the preceding list of things that depend on us, which includes not just clearly rational capacities such as judgment (*iudicium*) and assent (*consensus*), but moreover appetite (*appetitus*) or inclination (*declinatio*), which do not by definition have to be seen as rational capacities, i.e. capacities the activity of which involves reason, somewhat qualifies the account. In the light of these latter considerations, it seems that the notion of that which depends on us here is rather inclusive than exclusive. A significant fact about the account is that it nevertheless seems to conceive of that which depends on us strictly as the motions of our souls, rather than of actions.

Calcidius, moreover, like some of the other sources of the standard Middle-Platonist account of that which depends on us and fate, gives an additional account in which that which depends on us is situated within a taxonomy of modal notions (in chs. 150–159). It is noteworthy that the only indication we get of to whom Calcidius wants to ascribe this taxonomy is the rather unspecific information that it was introduced 'by the ancients'.¹⁶² It is thus unclear whether Calcidius thinks that this section is to be seen as an interpretation of Plato, or rather as something he himself considers to be a reasonable element of any account of fate and that which depends on us.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Calcidius, *Tim.* 142.17 Waszink: [...] *arbitrio ac voluntate* [...]; 142.18; [...] *alia quae voluntate fiant* [...]; 145.17: [...] *ex voluntate nostra* [...]; 145.20–21: [...] *ea porro, quae nostri arbitrii nostrique iuris sunt, sponte nostra* [...].

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Calcidius, *Tim.* 151.5–6 Waszink.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Calcidius, *Tim.* 151.6–7 Waszink: [...] *quae sunt in nobis posita, quoniam tam horum quam eorum quae his contraria sunt optio penes nos est.* [...]. These things are in the immediately following sentence depicted as '*quaeque [...] sunt nostrae potestatis*'.

¹⁶² Cf. Calcidius, *Tim.* 155.13–14 Waszink: [...] *Omnia quae sunt in tres partes a veteribus divisa sunt* [...].

This taxonomy, then, divides all things that exist into three main classes, namely (i) as the overall genus ‘what is possible’ (*possibile*), and as the two species of that genus (ii) what is necessary (*necessarium*), and (iii) the contingent (*ambiguum, dubium*).¹⁶³ The definitions Calcidius gives are thus that ‘the necessary is the possible of which the opposite is impossible’ (*Necessarium est possibile cuius contrarium est impossibile*),¹⁶⁴ while ‘the contingent is the possible of which also the opposite is possible’ (*Dubium est possibile cuius etiam contrarium possibile*),¹⁶⁵ ‘that, then, is possible of which also the opposite is equally possible’.¹⁶⁶ The interesting thing for our present purposes is that Calcidius divides the contingent (*dubium*) into three different subclasses, namely (a) things that happen often (*quae frequentia sunt*), (b) things that happen equally often (i.e. as they do not) (*quae peraeque frequentia*) and as opposed to (a) there are (c) those things the occurrences of which are rare (*quae quidem rari exempli sunt*).¹⁶⁷ Calcidius then states that it is concerning the subclass (b) of contingent things, i.e. concerning things that happen equally often, that the choice lies in the hands of man (*optio penes hominem*).¹⁶⁸ In this context, Calcidius moreover spells out what he takes this to mean:

(*sc.* choice) which, since it (*sc.* man) is a rational animal, entirely refers to reason and indeed to deliberation. Moreover, reason and deliberation are an inner motion of that which is the leading part in the soul; this indeed moves from itself and its motion is assent or appetite.¹⁶⁹

Though Calcidius obviously wants to point out that the choice (*optio*) in the case of man refers to rational capacities, it is somewhat unclear whether the implication of the passage is that all things which depend on us are those coming about through the exercise of our rational capacities, or whether the point is rather that the paradigmatic way this

¹⁶³ Cf. Calcidius, *Tim.* 155.14f. Waszink. Calcidius begins to denote the contingent ‘*ambiguum*’, but immediately changes his terminology and then instead uses ‘*dubium*’.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Calcidius, *Tim.* 155.19–20 Waszink.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Calcidius, *Tim.* 155.4–5 Waszink.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Calcidius, *Tim.* 155.5–6 Waszink. The definitions of the contingent and the possible appears to coincide here, and given this definition of the possible, it is slightly unclear how it is supposed to include the necessary.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Calcidius, *Tim.* 156.8ff. Waszink.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Calcidius, *Tim.* 156.12 Waszink. the term *optio* is replaced in 157.15, by *electio*.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Calcidius, *Tim.* 156.12–15 Waszink: [...] *qui, utpote, rationabile animal, cuncta revocat ad rationem atque consilium. Ratio porro et consilium motus est intimus eius, quod est in anima principale; hoc vero ex se movetur motusque eius assensus est vel appetitus.* [...].

comes about in man is through the exercise of our rational capacities, while there are things depending on us which do not have to involve such capacities.

Thus, the plausibly Middle-Platonist account in Calcidius is not entirely clear as to whether representing an inclusive or an exclusive notion of that which depends on us. On the other hand, an interesting feature of the account of that which depends on us, is the emphasis on the internal motions of our souls. This in fact constitutes an interesting restriction of the notion of that which depends on us and the account of whether actions do in some sense depend on us is consequently entirely absent.

5.5.5. *The notion of in nobis in Apuleius' De Platone*

The date of composition of the *De Platone et eius dogmate*, ascribed to Apuleius, is uncertain, but an approximate suggestion places it around 150 AD.¹⁷⁰ It contains two books. Book I deals with *physics*, and Book II with *ethics*. We find traces of the account of 'that which depends on us' (*in nobis, in nobis situm*) in both books.

To begin with, Book I on *physics* falls in two parts, the first one on *theology and cosmology*, the second on *anthropology*.¹⁷¹ The account of providence, fate, chance, and 'that which depends on us', is then found in the first part, i.e. the one on *theology and cosmology*. As has been pointed out, while the *De Platone* as a whole has many similarities in content with the *Didascalicus*, one of the dissimilarities is that the *De Platone* gives more space to somewhat non-platonic doctrines, among them the theory of providence.¹⁷² In Apuleius' version, then, we learn that among the things that happen, providence only regards some of these:

¹⁷⁰ Cf. the intricate discussion in Beaujeu 1973, XXIX–XXXV, who goes through the innumerable pros and cons of mainly the suggestions that the two *opuscula*, *De Platone* and *De Mundo*, given their comparatively low quality in style as well as content, must be (a) works of Apuleius as a young student in Athens (sometime between 145 and 155), or (b) works of Apuleius at the end of his life, and in the end, I take it, Beaujeu opts for the early dating of at least *De Platone*. For Apuleius in general and the *De Platone* in particular, cf. the introduction and notes in Beaujeu 1973, VII–LIV, 49–59, 249–308.

¹⁷¹ Cf. the synopsis in Beaujeu 1973, 50–51.

¹⁷² Cf. Beaujeu 1973, 58–59, who actually speaks of the theory of 'three-fold providence'.

all the things which happen naturally and thereby correctly are governed by the power of providence, and god cannot be ascribed the cause of any evil.¹⁷³

Thus, on this account, evils are not caused by god and not governed by divine providence. Apuleius in fact merely states some major points, while the details of this account of providence are never made entirely clear. First, then, rather than talking of a three-fold providence, Apuleius talks of a two-fold providence.¹⁷⁴ There is a ‘first providence’ (*prima providentia*)¹⁷⁵ attributed to the highest god, who has created the laws (*leges*) and given to the lower gods the task of overseeing what is necessary to happen each day, which constitutes a ‘second providence’ (*secunda providentia*).¹⁷⁶ The relation of providence (*providentia*) to fate (*fatum*) is stated thus:

fate is the divine law, through which god’s inevitable thoughts and projects are completed. Thus, if something is given by providence, then fate executes it and what is fulfilled by fate must be seen as undertaken by providence.¹⁷⁷

Thus, there is a hint that fate would have the form of a law, but Apuleius never indicates in what sense this should be understood. Especially, there is no mention of fate as hypothetical, i.e. as including all things but only regulating the consequences of what we do. For our present purposes, the main point in Apuleius’ physical account is that ‘not all things should be referred to the power of fate’,¹⁷⁸ since ‘there is

¹⁷³ *De Platone* Beaujeu ch. XII.205: [...] *Sed omnia quae naturaliter et propterea recte feruntur providentiae custodia gubernantur nec ullius mali causa deo poterit adscribi.* [...].

¹⁷⁴ Perhaps the tendency, not only in Beaujeu 1973, but quite generally, e.g. Sharples 2003, 107ff. of speaking of ‘the theory of three-fold providence’ in relation to Apuleius, is based on drawing a parallel to the account tri-partition of gods, i.e. god, the gods, and the demons, immediately preceding the account of providence, a parallel stated explicitly by Beaujeu 1973, 273. Indeed, we find that view, i.e. that the demons correspond to a tertiary providence, in Nemesius *NH* 43 125.21.ff and in Ps.-Plutarch *De fato* 9 572.Eff. Apuleius, however, does not himself draw any such parallel. Or, it is based on seeing fate as a third ‘component’ of providence, to be added to primary and secondary providences. I cannot however, find anything in Apuleius’ *De Platone* indicating such a theory. In fact, it is far from evident to me that Apuleius should be taken to have a clearcut view about the interrelation of providence and fate.

¹⁷⁵ On the providential activity of the first god, cf. also ch. XXIII.253.

¹⁷⁶ *De Platone* Beaujeu, ch. XII.205–206.

¹⁷⁷ *De Platone* Beaujeu ch. XII.205: [...] *divinam legem esse fatum, per quod inevitabiles cogitationes dei atque incepta complentur. Unde si quid providentia geritur, id agitur et fato, et quod fato terminatur providentia debet susceptum videri.* [...].

¹⁷⁸ *De Platone* Beaujeu ch. XII.206: [...] *Nec sane omnia referenda esse ad vim fati* [...].

something that *depends on us* and something that depends on chance',¹⁷⁹ and 'the unpredicted accidents of chance are ignored by us'.¹⁸⁰ Thus, the picture we get in the physical account of Book I is that providence, on the one hand, does not include all things, given that it includes no evil things or events. Moreover, while its relation to fate (*fatum*) is slightly unclear, it is clear that fate (*fatum*) does not include all things, either. On the contrary, some things are to be referred to fate (*fatum*), other things depend on us (*in nobis*), and still other things depend on chance (*fortuna*).

In Book II, on ethics, we get some specifications as to what the things which depend on us are. Apuleius states that:

Among the things which depend on us, virtue is the primary good and also praiseworthy, for the one who seeks the good.¹⁸¹

This statement, then, seems to imply that not only virtue depends on us but that there would be other things as well which depend on us. Slightly earlier, Apuleius in fact gives a hint as to what, in addition to virtue, might depend on us, stating that:

But virtue is free and depends on us and is to be sought for by our desire; indeed, the vices to no less degree are free and depend on us, though they are not opted for by our desire.¹⁸²

Thus, according to Apuleius' account, at least both virtue and vices depend on us.¹⁸³ The significant feature of this account is that it appears that what depends on us depends on all agents in equal manner, and that the manner in which something depends on an agent is that when the agent does not yet have it, the acquisition of it depends on that agent.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ *De Platone* Beaujeu ch. XII.206: [...] *sed esse aliquid in nobis et in fortuna esse non nihil* [...].

¹⁸⁰ *De Platone* Beaujeu ch. XII.206: [...] *fortunae* [...] *improvidos casus ignorari a nobis* [...].

¹⁸¹ *De Platone* Beaujeu ch. XIII.238: [...] *Ex his quae in nobis sunt, primum bonum atque laudabile est virtus, bonum studentis* [...].

¹⁸² *De Platone* Beaujeu ch. XI.236: [...] *Sed virtutem liberam et in nobis sitam et nobis voluntate adpetendam; peccata vero esse non minus libera et in nobis sita, non tamen ea suscipi voluntate*. [...].

¹⁸³ Presumably, though, the plurals, (e.g. *Ex his quae in nobis sunt*) indicate that not just virtue and the vices depend on us but perhaps intermediate states or actions as well.

¹⁸⁴ Apuleius at *De Platone* Beaujeu ch. xx.248 describing the perfect sage, makes the point that the sage correctly thinks that 'all the things which lead to the good life do not depend on others' ([...] *omnia quae ad beatam vitam f[u]erunt non ex aliis pendere* [...] *sapiens recte putat* [...]). Beaujeu *ad loc.* translates 'ne dépend plus', which implies that the sage thinks this to be the case only in his state as a sage, not in general. This, however,

To conclude, then, what we find in the physical account of Apuleius' *De Platone* is a tri-partition of all the things that happen (*omnia quae feruntur*) into (i) what is to be referred to fate (*fatum*), (ii) what depends on us (*in nobis*), and (iii) what depends on chance (*fortuna*). In the ethical account, we find the view that both virtue and vices depend on us, and depend on all and everyone in an equal manner. This second feature is at least *prima facie*, then, fully compatible with the feature of the physical account, of isolating a class of things that depend on us. On the whole, then, it seems that the position of Apuleius somewhat falls short of being in tune with the standard Middle-Platonist account of fate and that which depends on us. As a matter of fact, the position rather resembles the rather simple tri-partition of causes in Plutarch.¹⁸⁵

5.5.6. *The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in Maximus of Tyre's Orations*

Maximus of Tyre probably delivered his *Orations* in Rome in the 180s.¹⁸⁶ In the *Or.* 13,¹⁸⁷ bearing the slightly misleading manuscript title *εἰ μαντικῆς οὔσης, ἔστιν τι ἐφ' ἡμῶν* (*Whether, if prophecy exists, there is anything depending on us*),¹⁸⁸ we get a discussion of the various aspects of the

granted that Apuleius is speaking of the same thing as he does in terms of *in nobis situm* etc, would seem to contradict the position taken there, i.e. that virtue, presumably being what most contributes to the good life, depends on all and everyone *to attain*.

¹⁸⁵ Whittaker 1987, 102–110, analyses a number of parallels between Apuleius and Alcinous, and their sources. Indeed, as he points out 1987, 103, these similarities are often even verbal, and they evidently must have had common sources. Still, in doctrine, as to the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν, in spite of the verbal similarities with Alcinous, Apuleius is clearly much closer to Plutarch. Hijmans 1987, 444–448 following Beaujeu 1973 rather seems to simply identify the Platonic references and some stoicizing elements in the *De platone* discussion of fate, chance and what is *in nobis*.

¹⁸⁶ On these problems, cf. Trapp 1997, xi–xii. The only clear indications regarding the date of Maximus writings is that he (i) delivered his surviving *Orations* during his first visit to Rome, and (ii) lectured in Rome during the reign of Commodus (sole emperor AD 180–191). Thus, it is at least probable that (iii) the *Orations* were delivered in the 180s.

¹⁸⁷ *Diss.* 13 (pp. 109–117 Trapp=pp.158,1–170,4 Hobein) was written *c.* AD 180, or perhaps earlier, cf. Trapp 1997, xi f. Cf. Baltes-Dörrie 1993, 88; 325 ff.

¹⁸⁸ The Manuscript title *εἰ μαντικῆς οὔσης, ἔστιν τι ἐφ' ἡμῶν* (*Whether, if prophecy exists, there is anything depending on us*) is thought by Trapp 1997, 115, to be misleading, in that 'the main subject is the compatibility of prophecy with human *intelligence* (§§ 2–3, 5, 9), rather than with Free Will'. However, the title does not speak of 'free will', but strictly refers to the problem as to whether the reality of Prophecy (i.e. about future events) does not exclude 'that which depends on us'. Still, then, the title is misleading, but rather in depicting the content as more technical and more specific than it evidently is.

compatibility of human intellect with prophecy, defined as divine intellect, differing from human intellect only in precision and certainty,¹⁸⁹ and which ‘does not hit its target every time’.¹⁹⁰ The two—allegedly opposed—are in Maximus’ view, on the contrary, things of the same kind,¹⁹¹ and he thus states that there is no reason to be puzzled about ‘in what way the autonomy of the human intellect uses prophecy, and how conversely when prophecy states the truth, human intellect is still capable of something’.¹⁹² This clearly indicates that the overall issue at stake is the compatibility of the idea of human intellect as achieving something with the idea of true prophetic statements about the future. But the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν figures in a slightly more narrow context, familiar from other Middle-Platonist texts, namely, the discussion of the relation between τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν and fate, unfortunately in a passage where the text seems corrupt. Maximus states that:

If then *that which depends on us* were itself by itself, and excluded from fate, there would be no need for prophecy. But if that which depends on us is mixed with the universe, and as much as this a part of fate, then prophecy will be established in accordance with necessity, though it will have to be discussed according to whether it is clear or not.¹⁹³

The first sentence here presumably makes the point that since prophecy concerns matters in which we take part, and gives us information on which to base our actions in these matters, basically of the form if *you* do *this* then *that* will happen, there would be no need for it if *that which depends on us* were not included in fate. The statement really makes sense only in the light of the Middle-Platonist conception of hypothetical fate, i.e. basically that fate merely determines the *consequences* of our actions, in relation to which prophecy is conceived as revealing what consequences are laid down by this hypothetical law of fate for particular actions in particular cases. Maximus then simply points out that excluding *that which depends on us* from (hypothetical) fate means that fate will

¹⁸⁹ *Diss.* 13.59–61 Trapp: [...] εἶναι τὴν μαντικὴν [...] νοῦν θεῖον, διαφέροντα τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου ἀκριβείᾳ καὶ βεβαιότητι [...].

¹⁹⁰ Transl. Trapp 1997. *Diss.* 13.40 Trapp: [...] οὐτε τὸ θεῖον πάντων εὐστοχόν [...].

¹⁹¹ *Diss.* 13.33. Trapp: χρήμα συγγενές.

¹⁹² *Diss.* 13.35–37 Trapp: [...] μὴθ’ ὅντινα τρόπον τὸ αὐτεξούσιον τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης γνώμης χρῆται μαντικῇ, μὴθ’ ὅπως, ἀληθευούσης τῆς μαντικῆς δύναται τι καὶ ἀνθρώπου γνώμη [...].

¹⁹³ *Diss.* 13.96–100 Trapp: [...] Εἰ μὲν οὖν τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν αὐτὸ ἦν καθ’ αὐτό, ἀπὸλλακτο δὲ εἰμαρμένης, οὐδὲν ἔδει μαντικῆς· εἰ δὲ ἀναγκάζεται τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν τοῖς ὅλοις μέρος ὅσον καὶ τοῦτο τῆς εἰμαρμένης, κατὰ μὲν τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ἡ μαντικὴ στήσεται, κατὰ δὲ τὸ † δῆλον ἡ μὴ, βουλευέσεται. † [...]. (Trapp indicates that the part within cruces (†) is corrupt).

not produce any specific fated consequences from what we do, and the need for prophecy, i.e. to predict such fated consequences, vanishes.¹⁹⁴ The second sentence, at the end of which the text is uncertain, states that if we instead take *that which depends on us* not to be separated from fate but instead as being mixed with the universe, and thus as having part in fate just as much as the universe generally has, then prophecy, which supposedly gives us information about the consequences of our actions, will again be bound to necessity, and we will have use and need for it.

The argument here is then basically that for prophecy, *qua* predictions of specific consequences of specific actions and things ἐφ' ἡμῖν we may opt for, to be possible, τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν cannot be excluded from fate, but must be included in fate, which means that it has to be mixed with the universe.¹⁹⁵

Now, in comparison with what we find in other Middle-Platonist sources, Maximus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν on the whole is quite orthodox. First of all, Maximus thinks that τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν has to be *included* in fate. This is what we get in e.g. Ps.-Plutarch's *De fato*, i.e. that while fate includes all things (ἡ μὲν γὰρ εἰμαρμένη πάντα περιέχει),¹⁹⁶ some do

¹⁹⁴ Trapp 1997, *ad loc.* 120, n. 12 rightly points out that '[t]he argument here seems to depend on the thought that it is the regular, uncapricious operations of fate that make the predictions of prophecy both possible (cf. Cic. *De Div.* 1.127) and desirable.' But then states: 'If [...] human decision-making was the only factor conditioning future events, then future events could be equally satisfactorily foreseen by consulting human agents about their intentions, without reference to oracles and divination'. Quite evidently though, there is no mention of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν being in any way 'the only factor conditioning future events', i.e. of fate being annihilated by it, but merely of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν as being cut off from fate, and notably of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν as yielding, by being connected to fate, necessary consequences, for the revelation of which prophecy was needed.

¹⁹⁵ Trapp 1997, *ad loc.* 120, n. 13, thinks that: 'The phrasing at this point seems to gloss over what ought to be a very important distinction. The overall picture Maximus seems to want is that of Middle Platonism, in which human Free Will is a genuinely autonomous factor, but his choice of wording here comes close to the Stoic contention that 'Free Will' is only an aspect of a rigid, all-embracing fate. Maximus' formulation here may be a reflection of the difficulty experienced by Middle Platonists in general in simultaneously asserting the universality of divine control and defending the reality of human Free Will: cf. e.g. the use made in Alcin. *Didasc.* 26 and [Plut.] *De fato*. 569dff., of the analogy between fate and law, discussed by Dillon 1977: 294–298, and 320–326.' However, as far as I know, neither Maximus nor the other Middle Platonists actually discussed the relevant issues in terms of 'Free will', or even mentioning the will as a capacity at all, even less so the Stoics.

¹⁹⁶ *De fato* 570.E.9–10. Sieveking.

not happen by necessity, but each happens according to how it has naturally come to be. (τὰ δ' οὐκ ἔξ ἀνάγκης γενήσεται, ἀλλ' ἕκαστον αὐτῶν οἷον καὶ πέφυκεν εἶναι).¹⁹⁷ Also in Alcinous' *Didascalicus*, we learn that this was in fact Plato's view: 'All things, he [Plato] says, are within the sphere of fate, but not all things are fated' (Πάντα μὲν φησιν ἐν εἰμαρμένῃ εἶναι, οὐ μὴν πάντα καθεμάρθαι).¹⁹⁸ In this respect, then, Maximus aligns himself to what seems to be the Platonist orthodoxy of his time. Moreover, Maximus further ahead attacks the specific problem of how God prophesizes about things that are ἐφ' ἡμῖν.¹⁹⁹ Using the common examples of the prophecies concerning the consequences of Laius' begetting a son, and of Croesus crossing the Halys, Maximus draws on what is more or less the standard Middle-Platonist view of hypothetical fate. Thus, he specifies what God actually says in the Croesus case: 'He does not say that he will cross the river, but what will happen to him after having crossed it' (ὅτι μὲν διαβήσεται οὐ λέγει, τί δὲ πείσεται διαβάς λέγει). A more clear statement of how providence includes everything is made in relation to the Laius case, i.e. that if he begets a son, the son will kill him: 'He speaks thus, but he knows that he is advising a man intemperate and with a weakness for strong drinks, and through this he predicts the disaster for which Laius may have provided the cause, but in which God discerned the reason'.²⁰⁰

Maximus, then, on the whole aligns himself to the standard Middle-Platonist account of hypothetical fate in which fate includes all things, where some things—among which τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν is found—are included but only stated as hypotheses, while other things are instead included and stated as consequences of things of the former kind, e.g. what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Moreover, his association, throughout the account, of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν with the human intellect, clearly indicates an exclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

¹⁹⁷ *De fato* 570.E.10–F.2 Sieveking. It is quite obvious that 'by necessity' (ἔξ ἀνάγκης) is here used in the sense of 'by a cause external to the nature of the thing in question.'

¹⁹⁸ *Did.* 179.2–3. Plutarch is naturally an exception from this doctrine, since he, instead of making that which depends on us (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν) a part of fate (ἡ εἰμαρμένη), sees the two as distinct yet interacting causal factors along with chance (τύχη).

¹⁹⁹ *Diss.* 13.108–109 Trapp: [...] Πῶς δὲ δὴ καὶ θεὸς τῶν ὅσα ἐφ' ἡμῖν καταμαντεύεται; [...] Trapp 1997, 121 glosses ὅσα ἐφ' ἡμῖν as 'the actions of human Free Will'.

²⁰⁰ *Diss.* 13.113–116 Trapp: [...] ταῦτα λέγει μὲν, ἀλλὰ οἶδεν ἀνδρὶ συμβουλευσὼν ἀκολάστῳ καὶ ἀκρατεῖ μέθης, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο προλέγει τὴν συμφορὰν, ἧς παρῄσχεν μὲν τὴν ἀρχὴν ὁ Λαῖος, ἐγνώρισεν δὲ τὴν αἰτίαν ὁ θεός. [...].

5.6. *Conclusions concerning Middle-Platonist notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν*

In analyzing the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the authors traditionally labelled Middle Platonists, it is clear that we can discern a standard notion that includes a number of specific elements, based on a specific way of answering the question of how to reconcile the all-inclusiveness of fate with a notion of something being ἐφ' ἡμῖν. However, we can also discern several authors that constitute interesting exceptions to this standard view. As examples of such exceptions, e.g. the early Philo of Alexandria does not connect the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν to an account of fate, but the issue is often simply the proper analysis of the basis of moral praise and blame. On Philo's view things are ἐφ' ἡμῖν if they have been or could have been subject to rational scrutiny guided by our intellect, and many of our inner states such as our intentions to act in certain ways are themselves not ἐφ' ἡμῖν, since they have not been rationally scrutinized. This strong emphasis on the activity of rational capacities shows that the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Philo is what we have called an exclusive notion. Moreover, in Plutarch the notion is indeed connected to an account of fate but not the standard Middle-Platonist one. Plutarch operates with a tripartition of causes into fate (εἰμασμένη), and chance (τύχη), and what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The issue is to defend the autonomy of human agency, and in Plutarch's view, this is achieved by identifying this class of things for which *we* are the only causes (αἰτίαι). Plutarch thus excludes both what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν and what happens by chance (τύχη), from the realm of fate. Plutarch's notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is mainly inclusive. With these two exceptions in mind, the elements of the standard Middle-Platonist account become more clear. In the main sources for this account analyzed above, Alcinous' *Didascalicus*, Ps.-Plutarch's *De fato*, Nemeseius of Emesa's *De natura hominis*, Calcidius' *In Timaeum*, Apuleius' *De Platone*,²⁰¹ and Maximus of Tyre's *Orations*, the main idea is that all things are *included* in fate. But significantly, among the things included in fate, some are fated, i.e. they follow from fate and are necessary, others are not fated and not necessary, and

²⁰¹ While Apuleius' account certainly includes elements of the common Middle-Platonist views of providence, fate, and τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν it should be said that his tri-partition of what is to be referred to fate, what is to be referred to chance, and τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, resembles the similar tri-partition we find in Plutarch, rather than the standard Middle-Platonist account which stresses that fate includes all things. The lack of detail in Apuleius, I take it, makes it difficult to say what is in fact lack of orthodoxy in doctrine and what is lack of orthodoxy in emphasis.

among the latter, they place what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The standard Middle-Platonist notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, thus, like the Early Stoa, situates it within an account of fate, but defends what seems like a weaker version of the fate principle, i.e. the principle that all things happen according to fate. Particularly, then, the Middle-Platonist version introduces the idea that there are differences as to how things are included, and this point is spelled out with reference to how political laws in a way include things differently. As we have seen, this account was inspired by some hints in various Platonic passages, rather than any complete Platonic theory of the matter. As to the details of this account, it was moreover found that several of the sources, in addition to the hypothetical account of fate, add a section in which what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν is situated within a taxonomy of modal notions, and located within the class of the contingent that happens in equal parts. This account appears to draw mainly on the tentative ontology of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν given in Aristotle's *EN* III,²⁰² rather than on any Platonic passage. An interesting feature in the standard Middle-Platonist account is that there seems to be no clear orthodoxy as to understanding the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the exclusive or the inclusive way. An exclusive tendency is found in Alcinous' *Didascalicus* and in Maximus of Tyre's *Orations*, a clearly inclusive notion is found in Ps.-Plutarch's *De Fato*, but in Nemesius, Calcidius and Apuleius, the matter is unclear. Though some of the sources shows a tendency to reserve the notion for some inner activities of the soul, and deny it to actions, i.e. as in some places in Alcinous, and more clearly in Calcidius, the general view in Middle-Platonism seems to be that it applies to actions.

²⁰² Cf. chapter 3 above. For other examples of the Middle-Platonist tendency of using Aristotle to spell out Platonist intuitions, cf. Whittaker 1987, 110–114.

CHAPTER SIX

PLOTINUS RECONSIDERED

In the preliminary observations regarding Plotinus' notion of $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\iota\nu$ and its variants in Chapter 2, we found it in several treatises in the *Enneads*, ranging from the early *On fate* (III.1[3]), *On numbers* (VI.6[34]) and *On the voluntary and the wish of the One* (VI.8[39]); up to the late *On well-being* (I.4 [46]) and *On providence I* (III.2[47]). These occurrences, as we saw, could be differentiated according to the subject of predication, or, in other words, according to the things to which the notion is applied. Partly from this aspect, *Ennead* VI.8 contained some features which make it particularly interesting from the point of view of the tradition of writings on $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\iota\nu$ preceding Plotinus, as well as from the point of view of the rest of the *Enneads*. These features were first of all *the scope of the investigation*, i.e. the fact that Plotinus' investigation not only includes the analysis of the notion within the realm of human agency, but its application to the Intellect and the One as well. Secondly, there was the detailed and unique *criticism of the Aristotelian notion* as being too inclusive and inconsistent. Thirdly, there was *the restriction of the applicability of the notion*, by an analysis that subsequently added stronger criteria for something being $\epsilon\pi\iota$ someone, which seemed influenced by the investigation of its application to higher levels than individual human agents, and which appeared to go much further than any previous author. Given particularly these features, several questions pop up, namely what the discussions of this notion in the tradition of writings on $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\iota\nu$ preceding Plotinus actually amounted to, and thus to what extent Plotinus is developing this notion, as well as the conception of what issues it involves. However, as we saw in going through previous interpretations of Plotinus' notion of $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\iota\nu$, there is no general consensus concerning what tradition or sources Plotinus primarily draws on. Some emphasize the Stoic influences, others point specifically to Aristotle's *EN* III, still others focus on Alexander of Aphrodisias, while yet others find faithfulness to a generally Platonic position.¹

¹ Cf. Section 2.3. above.

Moreover, we saw that much confusion and unclarity in the secondary literature on these matters derive from tendencies of reading Plotinus with some non-argued for assumption that Plotinus and all of his predecessors were discussing one and the same general problem while using different terminology and in different contexts, rather than focusing on the specific issues in the particular contexts, often hinted by differences in terminology.² Therefore, with the aim of coming to terms with some of these problems, I set out to analyze the notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the three main schools within the tradition of writings on ἐφ' ἡμῖν preceding Plotinus. The aim of this analysis was to discern within the Aristotelian, Stoic and Middle-Platonist traditions respectively, both the specific features of their notions of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν as well as their specific conceptions of what the underlying philosophical issue was.

Now, then, we are more able to say something specific on how Plotinus' notion relates to this tradition, i.e. what more specifically it is that he criticizes, what he adopts in his own account, and what he achieves by his own analysis. In this Chapter, I analyze, in the light of the results of the study of the background, the occurrences of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν and the related forms of ἐπί + *dativus personae* in the *Enneads*. I begin with the occurrences outside *Ennead VI.8*, and then move on to those within *VI.8*. Finally, I draw some general conclusions from this analysis, both as to the differences and similarities within the *Enneads*, as well as regarding Plotinus' discussion of this notion in the light of the preceding traditions.

6.1. Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν outside *Ennead VI.8*

In this section I analyze the occurrences of the notion outside *VI.8*, i.e. in *On fate* (III.1[3]);³ *On well-being* (I.4[46]), and *On providence I* (III.2[47]). In going through the evidence, I will follow Porphyry's chronological order of the treatises of the *Enneads*. This is useful in giving an idea of the extent to which Plotinus showed a continued interest in, and

² Cf. Section 2.3.

³ I will not in the following analysis discuss the single occurrence in *On numbers* (VI.6[34]), in any further detail, given that it is less than informative. Bertier 1980, *ad loc.* 147 does not comment on the passage.

preoccupation with, the issues involved. Moreover, in this more detailed analysis, we will be able to specify the extent to which Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν developed.⁴

6.1.1. On fate (III.1[3])

As we saw before,⁵ Plotinus in the early *On fate* (III.1[3]) discusses various views on fate (εἰμασμένη), i.e. primarily views of the nature and scope of fate, and of how human agency fits into an account of fate. The topic is thus the well-known Hellenistic debate on how to reconcile some seemingly deterministic features of causal explanation which makes reference to fate, with common intuitions that we somehow are the causes of what we do, and thus also responsible for what we do.

Plotinus first dismisses as unacceptable some solutions that he thinks introduce uncaused events (ch. 1).⁶ He then dismisses what is usually taken to be the Aristotelian view and which identifies various classes of causes, as insufficient, since it only identifies the proximate causes of things, and does not look further for higher causes (ch. 1–2).⁷

Plotinus then dismisses four views that actually do look for higher and remoter causes, namely: The Epicurean (Atomist) view that all

⁴ We will also return to this question, once having analyzed VI.8. below.

⁵ Cf. Section 2.1. above.

⁶ Bréhier 1925, 6–7 identifies the first of these three doctrines as Epicurean, and H-S², *ad loc.* in the *index fontium* specifically gives Philodemus *De signis* 36.13=Fr. 280 Usener. Armstrong 1999, 10 gives Lucretius *R.N.* II.292 Bailey, and Cicero *De fato* XXIII & *De finibus* I.19. Bréhier identifies the other two doctrines as referring to Carneades' doctrine *ap.* Cicero, *De fato* XVII, 28, of causes being 'Fortuitae [...] non inclusae in rerum natura et mundo'. Bréhier's talk of these three doctrines as 'doctrines contingentistes' is misleading. Though they may well all accept contingency, this is not immediately relevant here, only simply that they introduce uncaused events, which is unacceptable (III.1.7.15–16: τὸ δ' ἀναίτιον οὐ παραδεκτέον). Contingency, I take it, does not imply uncaused events, and is thus not as such at stake here.

⁷ For the Aristotelian references, cf. H-S², *ad loc.*, *index fontium*. Bréhier 1925, 4, perhaps correctly, sees a reference rather to the more developed view of Alexander of Aphrodisias, who on top of the plurality of causes, put together the identification of nature with fate, and thus argued that causes not referred to nature fall outside the reach of fate. If Plotinus in a discussion of fate refers to Aristotle, this is indeed anachronistic, but it is not therefore unlikely. That Alexander is intended as referent is moreover not self-evident. For Alexander, cf. *De fato* ch. 4–5, and section 3.4. of the present study. As we will see, though, Plotinus in III.1 ends up defending, though differently than Alexander, both the plurality of causes and a limitation of the reach of fate.

things are caused by atoms (ch. 3); the Stoic or Stoicizing Platonist view that all things are caused by the world-soul (ch. 4); the Astrologers' view that all things are caused by the stars (ch. 5–6), and the Stoic view that all things are caused by the universal chain of causation (ch. 7).⁸ Plotinus in addition briefly states the Platonic view he himself endorses (ch. 8–10).⁹

The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is discussed on the one hand in, as it were, negative contexts, e.g. in Chapter 7, where Plotinus refutes the theory of the universal chain of causation. On the other hand, it is discussed in positive contexts, e.g. in Chapters 9 and 10, where Plotinus argues in favour of his own Platonic view.

To begin with, in Chapter 7 we find the singular substantivized form (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν) in the negative statement about the (Stoic) theory of the universal chain of causation. If the theory is true, Plotinus states, 'that which depends on us (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν) will only be a word'.¹⁰ Plotinus' argument runs as follows:

It (sc. the theory at stake) certainly has in it the absolute necessity of all things, and whith all the causes included it is not possible for a single thing not to happen: for if all things¹¹ are included in fate, there is nothing which may hinder it or make it happen otherwise. If they are like this, starting from a single principle, this will leave nothing for us except to be carried in whatever direction they force us. For our impressions will depend on the things preceding them and our impulses will follow our impressions, and *that which depends on us* will be a mere word; it will not exist any more just because it is we who have the impulses, if the impulse is produced in accordance with those preceeding things; our part will be like that of the other animals and that of babies, which go according to blind impulses, and that of madmen, for these also have impulses—yes, by Zeus, fire has impulses too, and all things which are enslaved to their own *constitution* and move according to it. Everyone else sees this and does

⁸ H-S² in the *index fontium* to ch. 3–7 give numerous suggestions as to the sources to these views.

⁹ Cf. Armstrong 1999, 6–7, and Bréhier 1925, 3–5. As pointed out by Bréhier 1925, 4, these four or perhaps three views (the last two being one and the same Stoic theory) were criticized together and in a similar way by the Cynic Oenomaus, *ap.* Eusebius *E.VI.7.17*.

¹⁰ *Enn.* III.1.7.15: ὁνομά τε μόνον τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἔσται. The formulation is not new. As we saw in section 3.4. above, Alexander has a similar criticism of the Stoics (*De fato* 182.23–24 Bruns: οὐκ ὁνομά μόνον τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῖν), as is also rightly indicated by H-S² in the *index fontium*, *ad loc.*

¹¹ Armstrong, *ad loc.* translates 'if all *causes* are included in fate', but this is rather the conclusion of what is stated.

not dispute it; but they look for other causes of this impulse of ours, and do not stop at this universal principle.¹² (my italics).

As is obvious, Plotinus' concern with this theory has to do with his interpretation of the fate principle,¹³ i.e. the principle that all things happen according to fate. The universal chain of causation view states that all causes have one and the same principle, namely fate, and this then is the sense in which all things are fated. The fate principle thus understood, (εἰ πάντα εἴληπται ἐν τῇ εἰμαρμένῃ), according to Plotinus, implies that everything that happens is necessary, i.e. it is impossible for it not to happen. The notion of necessity (ἀνάγκη) at stake is clearly one such that if for some given thing *A* there is no such thing *B* that could hinder *A* from happening the way it does, then *A* is necessary, i.e. necessarily happens the way it does. Thus, Plotinus argues, if the theory of universal chain of causation is true, since all things are within fate and have one sole principle, for any given thing it is the case that that thing is included in fate, and that there is no such thing standing outside fate that would be able to hinder it from happening the way it does. Therefore, every single thing which happens would be necessary. Thus, it is clear that what in Plotinus' view is lacking in this theory is the existence of causes with another principle than fate. Only a plurality of kinds of causes, i.e. of principles of causes, would guarantee that something is non-necessary.

If we look specifically at the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, here the first part of the argument points in one direction, namely, that granted the debated view, τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν will be but a name since the way we act *entirely* depends on originally external factors through one simple chain of causation, i.e. since the prior causes *entirely* determine the impressions which in turn *entirely* determine the impulses. Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is then one

¹² *Enn.* III.1.7.8–24H–S²: [...] ἔχει μὲν οὖν (sc. αὐτὴ ἡ δόξα) τὴν πάντως πάντων ἀνάγκη, καὶ πάντων εἰλημμένων τῶν αἰτίων οὐκ ἔστιν ἕκαστον μὴ οὐ γίνεσθαι· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔτι τὸ κωλύσον ἢ ἄλλως γενέσθαι ποιῆσον, εἰ πάντα εἴληπται ἐν τῇ εἰμαρμένῃ. τοιαῦτα δὲ ὄντα ὡς ἀπὸ μᾶς ἀρχῆς ὥρμημένα ἡμῖν οὐδὲν καταλείψει, ἢ φέρεσθαι ὅπῃ ἂν ἐκεῖνα ὦθῃ. αἱ τε γὰρ φαντασίαι τοῖς προηγησαμένοις αἱ τε ὀρμαὶ κατὰ ταύτας ἔσσονται, ὄνομά τε μόνον τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἔσται· οὐ γὰρ ὅτι ὀρμώμεν ἡμεῖς, ταύτῃ τι πλέον ἔσται τῆς ὀρμῆς κατ' ἐκεῖνα γεννωμένης τοιοῦτον τε τὸ ἡμέτερον ἔσται, οἷον καὶ τὸ τῶν ἄλλων ζώων καὶ τὸ τῶν νηπίων καθ' ὁρμὰς τυφλὰς ἰόντων καὶ τὸ τῶν μαινομένων· ὀρμῶσι γὰρ καὶ οὗτοι· καὶ νῆ Δία καὶ πυρὸς ὀρμαὶ καὶ πάντων ὅσα δουλεύοντα τῇ αὐτῶν κατασκευῇ φέρεται κατὰ ταύτην. τοῦτο δὲ καὶ πάντες ὀρῶντες οὐκ ἀμφισβητοῦσιν, ἀλλὰ τῆς ὀρμῆς ταύτης ἄλλας αἰτίας ζητοῦντες οὐχ ἴστανται ὡς ἐπ' ἀρχῆς ταύτης. [...].

¹³ For the fate principle, cf. the Section 4.1. on Chrysippus, and for Middle Platonists Chapter 5.

according to which if an agent contributes in some way to something that happens, that thing depends on the agent. His concern would simply be that if we do not in any way contribute to anything, nothing depends on us. This criticism stands even if we grant that it is we who have the impulses. The second part of the argument, however, seems to operate with a different notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Here, the criticism seems to be based on the fact that, granted the debated view, we actually *do* contribute something, since such a contribution is already assumed if something is having an impulse, and in the same way for other animals, babies and madmen, and fire, which all have impulses. From this perspective, then, what is insufficient about the debated view is that the sense of 'having an impulse' involved applies to things which in Plotinus' view are enslaved to their *constitution*¹⁴ and move according to it (ὅσα δουλεύοντα τῇ αὐτῶν κατασκευῇ φέρεται κατὰ ταύτην).

Thus, Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in his criticism of the Stoic idea of the universal chain of causation on the one hand seems to point to an understanding of the notion in which something would be ἐφ' ἡμῖν if we in any way contributed to it. This would then be what we called an *inclusive notion*, according to which if in some sense the principle of a thing happening is in the agent, that thing depends on the agent. On the other hand, Plotinus' notion here also reveals the intuition that the fact that we contribute to the way something happens is not enough for it to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν, but on the contrary, some ways of contributing to, say, an action, such as simply having an impulse to perform that action, are insufficient for making that action ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and rather constitute a form of enslavement under one's own constitution. On this latter intuition, then, for something to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν requires that we contribute in some way that goes beyond being enslaved to our own constitution. This resembles what we called an *exclusive notion* of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, i.e. one in which some things that have their principle in us are not ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and others which in some fuller sense have their principle in us are ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The question here is then if Plotinus would spell out this 'fuller sense'

¹⁴ The term rendered by 'constitution' here, κατασκευή, is ambiguous. On the one hand, it has the connotation of a temporary state or condition of something, as in IV.4.45.5 where ἔχει φύσεως καὶ κατασκευῆς simply picks up ἔχει φύσεως καὶ διαθέσεως two lines above. On the other hand, it has the connotation of 'construction', both as act (IV.4.26.19) and as constitution, structure, design (II.9.18.5 of a house, as a metaphor of the body). The mention of fire settles the matter in our passage, i.e. neither 'a temporary state' of the fire, nor 'an act of construction' of the fire would make sense; only the sense of 'the constitution, structure, or design of fire as such' makes sense.

with reference to the rationality of the agent? As we will see, further ahead, he actually does, though in a rather more specific way.

Still, even though we can say something about the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν here, i.e. on the conditions for its application, it is not evident what things Plotinus actually thinks are ἐφ' ἡμῖν. As we saw before, the early Stoic theory Plotinus comments on in the passage would probably have it that τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν refers quite specifically to *assent*, either *qua* act or *qua* particular capacity of the soul, and indirectly to *actions*.¹⁵ Whether Plotinus here intends the same thing is not made explicit nor evident from the context. Though the notion here is rather technical, and plausibly one assuming a commonsensical idea that while some things do not depend on us, something—τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν—actually depends on us (all) in equal manner, it is not evident exactly what he thinks is ἐφ' ἡμῖν. In describing the debated theory, Plotinus mentions that *it* 'wants to grant something to us and to everyone when it comes to doing (ποιεῖν) something by ourselves';¹⁶ and he mentions impressions (φαντασίαι) and impulses (ὁρμαί). However, all these things refer to what the defenders of the debated view would claim to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and they do not help us to specify what Plotinus, given his exclusive condition for something being ἐφ' ἡμῖν, takes to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

In Chapter 9, within the exposition of Plotinus' own view, we find the attributive form (i.e. as in *x* is ἐφ' ἡμῖν), and in combination with the notion of voluntary (ἐκούσιος). First, however, a brief point about what he states in the intermediate Chapter 8 must be made. In Chapter 8, Plotinus begins the exposition of his own view. He suggests that the individual soul¹⁷ is the additional cause that is lacking in the universal chain of causation view.¹⁸ The argument for its being an additional

¹⁵ On the Stoic notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, cf. Chapter 4 of the present study.

¹⁶ *Enn.* III.1.7.7–8: [...] βούλεται τι ἡμῖν καὶ ἐκάστοις χαρίζεσθαι εἰς τὸ παρ' ἡμῶν ποιεῖν τι [...]. I have translated it as 'doing', though in the widest sense, i.e. of making, contributing. Armstrong translation *ad loc.*, 'it does allow us, even as individuals, some room for action of our own', is, I take it, too specific. The 'παρ' ἡμῶν ποιεῖν' is more general than 'action', and for a reason: The debated view, as stated in line 2, regards all things (πάντα), and specifically the way the one and only principle 'imposes the quality on every individual thing' (καὶ τὸ πῶς ἐφ' ἐκάστου ἐπιφέρειουσιν), and, as stated in line 5, it, like the world-soul view, concerns 'every state and movement, our own and every other as well' [...] πᾶσαν καὶ σχέσιν καὶ κίνησιν ἡμετέραν τε καὶ πᾶσαν [...].

¹⁷ *Enn.* III.1.8.4: [...] ψυχὴν [...] τὴν ἐκάστου [...].

¹⁸ Plotinus more explicitly restates the view that there are thus two kinds of causes, i.e. things happen through the soul and other things through causes from what surrounds it, in ch. 10, at III.1.10.3: [...] τὰ μὲν ὑπὸ ψυχῆς, τὰ δὲ δι' ἄλλας αἰτίας τὰς κύκλῳ [...].

cause in the relevant sense is that unlike the other causes, it is itself an activity-initiating cause.¹⁹ Even though it is only without the body that the individual soul is absolutely master of itself, free and outside the cosmic cause, still, when brought into a body, ordered among other things and surrounded by chances, it can govern some things rather than being governed by them. This, however, depends on what kind of soul it is.²⁰ Given that we learned in Chapter 7 that merely acting from one's own constitution signified being enslaved to that constitution, it is then quite puzzling that Plotinus here states that the better soul, which has power over more, is 'the one which is good by nature'.²¹ This reference to the nature of the agent, as we will see, re-occurs later on as well.

At the beginning of Chapter 9, Plotinus states that '[t]hose things are necessary which happen when mixed with choice and chances'.²² We then get the statement where Plotinus gives his own view of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν:

When therefore, the soul is altered by the external causes, and so does something and drives on in a sort of blind rush, neither its action nor its disposition is to be called voluntary; this applies, too, when it is worse from itself and does not altogether have its impulses right or in control. When, however, in its impulse it has as director its own pure and untroubled reason, then this impulse alone is to be said to be *depending on us* and voluntary; this is our own act, which does not come from somewhere else but from within from our soul when it is pure, from a primary principle which directs and is in control, not suffering error from ignorance or defeat from the violence of the passions, which come upon it and drive and drag it about, and do not allow any acts to come from us any more but only passive responses.²³ (my italics).

There is a slight unclarity in this passage regarding the subject of predication, i.e. what is said to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν. In the negative part of the

¹⁹ *Enn.* III.1.8.8: [...] πρωτογγοῦ αἰτίας οὔσης [...].

²⁰ Cf. *Enn.* III.1.8.9ff.

²¹ *Enn.* III.1.8.18: [...] ἡ ἀγαθὴ τὴν φύσιν [...].

²² *Enn.* III.1.9.1–2: [...] Ἀναγκαῖα μὲν οὖν ταῦτα, ὅσα προαιρέσει καὶ τύχαις κραθέντα γίνεται [...].

²³ *Enn.* III.1.9.4–16: [...] ὅταν μὲν οὖν ἀλλοιωθεῖσα παρὰ τῶν ἔξω ψυχὴ πράττει τι καὶ ὁρμᾷ οἷον τυφλῇ τῇ φορᾷ χρωμένη, οὐχὶ ἐκούσιον τὴν πράξιν οὐδὲ τὴν διάθεσιν λεπτέον· καὶ ὅταν αὐτὴ παρ' αὐτῆς χείρων οὔσα οὐκ ὀρθαῖς πανταχοῦ οὐδὲ ἡγεμονούσας ταῖς ὁρμαῖς ἢ χρωμένη. λόγον δὲ ὅταν ἡγεμόνα καθαρόν καὶ ἀπαθῆ τὸν οἰκείον ἔχουσα ὁρμᾷ, ταύτην μόνην τὴν ὀρμὴν φατέον εἶναι ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ ἐκούσιον, καὶ τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ ἡμέτερον ἔργον, ὃ μὴ ἄλλοθεν ἦλθεν, ἀλλ' ἐνδοθεν ἀπὸ καθαράς τῆς ψυχῆς, ἀπ' ἀρχῆς πρώτης ἡγουμένης καὶ κυρίας, ἀλλ' οὐ πλάνην ἐξ ἀγνοίας παθούσης ἢ ἦτταν ἐκ βίας ἐπιθυμιῶν, αἱ προσελθοῦσαι ἄγουςι καὶ ἔλκουσι καὶ οὐκέτι ἔργα ἑῶν εἶναι, ἀλλὰ παθήματα παρ' ἡμῶν. [...].

passage, Plotinus indicates that what is at stake is both the soul's *acting* and its *having an impulse* (ὅταν [...] ψυχὴ πράττει τι καὶ ὁρμᾷ), rephrased as the *action* and the *disposition* (οὐχὶ [...] τὴν προᾶξιν οὐδὲ τὴν διάθεσιν). In the positive part, however, Plotinus only mentions the soul's *having an impulse* (ὅταν [...] ὁρμᾷ), and the *impulse* (τὴν ὁρμήν). In the positive part, he in addition speaks of our proper *work* (τὸ ἡμέτερον ἔργον) and *work from us* (οὐκέτι ἔργα ἑώσιν εἶναι [...] παρ' ἡμῶν). Strictly speaking then, Plotinus in the passage only applies the notion ἐφ' ἡμῖν to an *impulse of the soul*, and the condition for an impulse of the soul to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν is that the soul has its own pure and untroubled reason ruling it.²⁴ Only then, is the desire or impulse to be labeled 'depending on us' and 'voluntary' (ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ ἐκούσιον).

This statement signifies, as it were, a subject-specific restriction of the applicability of the notion and one in terms of satisfying a specific condition. What we learn here is that as regards impulses or desires, only some are ἐφ' ἡμῖν while others are not. On the one hand, the statement seems to imply an understanding of the notion in which some things, e.g. desires satisfying the condition, are ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the sense of depending equally on all of us, wise men as well as other types of agents. On the other hand, it is not clear that Plotinus would acknowledge that any other types of agents than the wise would actually be capable of such refined desires.²⁵ The immediate question here is thus: does the strong condition lead to the conclusion that non-wise agents never have an impulse which depends on their soul?

In ch. 10, Plotinus makes some conclusive remarks on his own view, and states that:

And souls, in all that they do, when they do it according to right reason, act of themselves, whenever they do act, but in everything else are

²⁴ A view restated in Chapter 10 (*Enn.* III.1.10.4–5) in terms of the souls 'acting of themselves' (παρ' αὐτῶν πράττειν) when they do something 'according to right reason' (κατὰ μὲν λόγον ποιούσας ὁρθόν).

²⁵ An obvious question to raise in relation to this statement is moreover what Plotinus here takes the relation between the two notions of 'voluntary' (ἐκούσιος) and 'depending on us' (ἐφ' ἡμῖν) to be. Plotinus does not within the treatise reveal in what sense he understands 'voluntary'. The mention, within the quoted passage, of ignorance and force (οὐ πλάνην ἔξ ἀγνοίας παθούσης ἢ ἦσαν ἐκ βίας ἐπιθυμιῶν) might seem to some as a reference to the two conditions (knowledge of particulars and absence of force), the violation of either making an action involuntary, in Aristotle's *EN* III. The sense, however, of external force is entirely different here, and instead of referring to the jurisprudentially significant case of people dragging the agent away or forcing the agent to do something, Plotinus refers to the passions as the external forces.

hindered in their own action and are passive rather than active. So other things are responsible for not thinking, and it is perhaps correct to say that these things act according to fate, at least for people who think that fate is an external cause. But the best actions come from ourselves; for this is the nature we are of, when we are alone; good and wise act and *it depends on them* to do the noble actions; but the others do their noble actions in so far as they have a breathing space and are allowed to do so, not getting their thinking from somewhere else, when they do think, and only when they are not being hindered.²⁶ (my italics).

The point made here is then that both wise men and non-wise agents can do noble actions, but differently. Plotinus points out that wise men do act, presumably meaning that they do not merely rest in contemplative activity, and adds that it depends on them (ἐπ' αὐτοῖς),²⁷ to do the noble actions. As to the non-wise, however, it appears that it does not depend on them to do the noble actions. Plotinus' description of them states four, I take it, necessary and together sufficient conditions for them to do noble actions: (i) they are allowed to and have breathing space, and (ii) they have not received their thoughts from some other place (which then presumably they sometimes do) and (iii) they do think (which they presumably sometimes do not), and (iv) they are not being hindered. Only when these conditions are all satisfied, then, do they perform noble actions.²⁸

Plotinus thus makes a sharp distinction between the conditions under which the wise men on the one hand, and other people on the other hand, perform noble actions. Also, what he says here is that when wise men perform noble actions, it depends on them, but when other people perform noble actions it depends on a range of other factors. One way of interpreting this would be to say that whether the wise men

²⁶ *Enn.* III.1.10.4–15: [...] πραττούσας δὲ ψυχὰς ὅσα πράττουσι κατὰ μὲν λόγον ποιούσας ὀρθὸν παρ' αὐτῶν πράττειν, ὅταν πράττωσι, τὰ δ' ἄλλα ἐμποδιζόμενας τὰ αὐτῶν πράττειν, πάσχειν τε μᾶλλον ἢ πράττειν. ὥστε τοῦ μὲν μὴ φρονεῖν ἄλλα αἴτια εἶναι· καὶ ταῦτα ἴσως ὀρθὸν καθ' εἰσαρμένην λέγειν πράττειν, οἷς γε καὶ δοκεῖ ἔξωθεν τὴν εἰσαρμένην αἴτιον εἶναι· τὰ δὲ ἄριστα παρ' ἡμῶν· ταύτης γὰρ καὶ τῆς φύσεώς ἐσμεν, ὅταν μόνον ὦμεν· καὶ τοὺς γε σπουδαίους (τὰ καλὰ) πράττειν καὶ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς [τὰ καλὰ πράττειν], τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους, καθ' ὅσον ἂν ἀναπνεύσωσι συγχωρηθέντες τὰ καλὰ πράττειν, οὐκ ἄλλοθεν λαβόντας τὸ φρονεῖν, ὅταν φρονῶσι, μόνον δὲ οὐ κωλυθέντας. [...]. (Including the changes given in the *addenda* in H-S², 313). Armstrong *ad loc.* translates καὶ ταῦτα [...] πράττειν, by 'and it is perhaps correct to say that the soul acts unthinkingly according to destiny', which is to much of a paraphrase.

²⁷ Armstrong's translation *ad loc.* 'by their own will' is inaccurate, since the will is not involved here.

²⁸ Mansfeld 1999a, 147, n. 42 thinks that this idea stems from the idea in Alcinous' *Did.* ch. 2, 153.5–14, that wisdom is unhinderable but what is bodily can be hindered.

perform noble actions depend entirely on them, but whether the non-wise people perform noble actions depends less or not at all on them.

We thus have a case of Plotinus applying the notion to specific subjects, i.e. not in a formula-like way that merely speaks of what generally depends on us (all) in terms of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, or τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The example moreover implies a notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in which it is conceivable that (doing) things can very well depend on some types of agents, e.g. wise men, while not depending on other types of agents, e.g. the rest of mankind.

Thus, even though the issue here is (noble) actions of agents, not impulses of the soul, the question raised above in relation to Chapter 9, then, whether the strong condition Plotinus gives for something depending on an agent (i.e. for being ἐπὶ that agent) results in denying, to all non-wise agents, anything that depends on them, must preliminarily be answered positively. It indeed appears that given Plotinus' condition, only the impulses of the wise man depend on himself, and it is only when the wise man performs (noble) actions that it depends on him to do them.²⁹

To summarize, then, the early *On fate* (III.1[3]) shows an interesting oscillation between two possibly contradictory notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Plotinus, on the one hand, in Chapter 7 dismisses that having an impulse (ὄρμᾶν) determined by one's own constitution (κατασκευή) would be ἐφ' ἡμῖν, since this sense of 'having an impulse', in Plotinus' view, refers to things which are *enslaved to their constitution* and move according to it (ὅσα δουλεύοντα τῇ αὐτῶν κατασκευῇ φέρεται κατὰ ταύτην).³⁰ Plotinus, on the other hand in Chapter 9 specifies a condition for the notion in relation to an impulse of the soul, and the condition for an impulse of the soul to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν is here that if the soul having the impulse has its own pure and untroubled reason ruling it, the impulse is ἐφ' ἡμῖν.³¹ What is striking then is that Plotinus in Chapter 10 links this sort of acting to the kind of *nature* we are of.³² He moreover states that only when wise

²⁹ This interpretation might seem to imply that the noble actions of the wise, unlike those of the non-wise, cannot be externally hindered. To my knowledge though, Plotinus does not explicitly draw this conclusion or explicitly develop his point in that direction. For a discussion of many of the problematic aspects of Plotinus way of using the wise as a paradigm for agency here, cf. Schniewind (2000).

³⁰ *Enn.* III.1.7.20–21.

³¹ A view restated in Chapter 10 (*Enn.* III.1.10.4) in terms of the souls 'acting of themselves' (παρ' αὐτῶν πράττειν) when they do something 'according to right reason' (κατὰ μὲν λόγον ποιούσας ὀρθόν).

³² *Enn.* III.1.10.10: [...] ταύτης γὰρ καὶ τῆς φύσεώς ἐσμεν [...].

men perform noble actions does it *depend on them* to do it, while when non-wise agents perform noble actions, it depends on a range of other factors.³³ On the whole, then, the general tendency of *On fate* seems to be that in the end having something depending on oneself is only to be granted to the wise. The evidence for this is first, that the wise presumably are the only ones having impulses depending on their own soul having its own pure reason ruling it, and secondly, that they alone perform (noble) actions which depend on them alone.

6.1.2. On well-being (*I.4*[46])

In *On well-being* (*I.4*[46]), Plotinus discusses various questions related to well-being (εὐδαιμονία). He begins by dismissing some previous views about what well-being is. Notably, he brings up Aristotle's view of successful performance of one's proper function (ch. 1), the Epicurean focus on a particular sort of conscious experience (ch. 2), and the Stoic idea of the life of reason and the idea of primary natural needs (ch. 2). Then he gives an extensive exposition of his own views (ch. 3–16).³⁴

In Chapter 7, within the exposition of his own views, Plotinus discusses the nature of well-being from the example of the wise man in a well-known stoic manner.³⁵ He then counters some objections one by one, by testing whether they lead to the conclusion that the wise man can be deprived of well-being. The general issue turns on whether external misfortunes affect the well-being of the wise man, and a crucial example is then whether the misfortune of becoming a war-slave makes well-being impossible for the wise man. Plotinus not only refutes this but then goes on to even state that:

Anyhow, many people will do better by becoming war-slaves; and *it depends on them* to depart if they find the burden heavy. If they stay, either it is reasonable for them to stay and there is nothing terrible about it, or if they stay unreasonably, when they ought not to, it is their own fault.³⁶ (my italics).

³³ The connection between this distinction and the statement that the wise men not only have 'the better soul, which has power over more' but also 'the one which is good by nature' (*Enn.* III.1.8.18: ἡ ἀγαθὴ τὴν φύσιν), is not entirely clear.

³⁴ On the treatise *On well-being* (*I.4* [46]) in general, cf. Armstrong 1966, 168–169, and Schniewind 2003, in particular ch. 5 and ch. 6.

³⁵ As is correctly noticed by H-S², referring to Epictetus and Seneca in the *index fontium. ad loc.*

³⁶ *Enn.* I.4.7.42–45: [...] καὶ πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ ἄμεινον αἰχμάλωτοι γινόμενοι πράξουσιν.

The remark is puzzling. The context, i.e. the preceding paragraph, makes it clear that by ‘departing’ Plotinus means committing suicide. However, it is not evident what point Plotinus is making here. Why does he think that the state of war-slaves, whether leading to suicide or not, would be better for the many? The most plausible answer gives us interesting information on the understanding of the notion here.

Plotinus appears to distinguish between three possible outcomes of ordinary agents being war-slaves, which can be spelled out as follows: (i) they commit suicide since the pressure (presumably the pain) is too heavy on them (and the suicide depends on them); (ii) they stay, i.e. they do not commit suicide, and it is reasonable for them to stay, and there is nothing terrible about it, (and it depends on them); (iii) they stay, i.e. they do not commit suicide, but unreasonably, when they ought not to, and it is their own fault (and it depends on them).³⁷ In all three cases, then, the actions of the non-wise agents in war-slavery are such that they depend entirely on them. The point here is that within this extremely limited setting, these agents can only be engaged in action that depends entirely on them. They are, in this specific sense, in a state where nothing can hinder them from doing whatever they do.

The point, then, seems to be that in this setting, non-wise agents come as close as they can towards acting in the way the wise man acts. In the paragraph preceeding the passage quoted above, Plotinus states that the wise, if taken as a war-slave, will indeed ‘depart’ as well ‘if it is not possible to live well’,³⁸ and in general, ‘he will think that the nature of this universe is of a kind to bring these sorts of misfortunes, and one must follow it’.³⁹ The state of war-slavery then puts such constraints on the non-wise agent that he is forced to act in a wise-man-like way.⁴⁰

καὶ ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς δὲ βαρυνομένοις ἀπελθεῖν ἢ μένοντες ἢ εὐλόγως μένουσι καὶ οὐδὲν δεινόν, ἢ ἀλόγως μένοντες, δέον μὴ, αὐτοῖς αἴτιοι. [...].

³⁷ *Enn.* I.4.7.44–45: [...] ἢ μένοντες ἢ εὐλόγως μένουσι καὶ οὐδὲν δεινόν, ἢ ἀλόγως μένοντες, δέον μὴ, αὐτοῖς αἴτιοι. [...].

³⁸ *Enn.* I.4.7.31–32: [...] ἀλλ’ εἰ ἀχμάλωτος ἄγοιτο, πάρ τοί ἐστιν ὁδὸς ἐξιέναι, εἰ μὴ εἷη εὐδαμονεῖν [...].

³⁹ *Enn.* I.4.7.40–42: [...] ἐνθυμοῖτο γὰρ ἄν, ὥς ἡ τοῦδε τοῦ παντός φύσις τοιαύτη, οἷα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα φέρειν, καὶ ἔπεσθαι χρῆ. [...].

⁴⁰ One alternate interpretation here would be that Plotinus expresses the general intuition that those who do not live as the ‘laws of the All wants’ are better off dead, also expressed at III.2.8, but this would make his addition of the cases where the agent in fact does stay unnecessary.

6.1.3. On providence I (*III.2*[47])

The late *On providence I* (*III.2*[47]), as we said in Chapter 2, is the first part of an original larger treatise, divided by Porphyry into two, thus creating the two treatises *On providence I* (*III.2*[47]) and *On providence II* (*III.3*[48]). In both treatises, Plotinus discusses various problems related to providence (πρόνοια).⁴¹ Plotinus' own view of providence as such is not entirely clear. He in some sense thinks that providence comes down from above and is present through the entire universe, though differently in different places.⁴² On the one hand, he talks of providence as if there is only one providence, including the totality of the universe.⁴³ On the other hand, he distinguishes in the Middle-Platonist way between providence and fate in terms of their occupying different regions, i.e. fate beginning from the lower region, (the physical world), and providence being in the upper region.⁴⁴ Moreover, he sometimes seems to talk of two providences, one upper, and one lower.⁴⁵

In Chapter 10, Plotinus discusses the problem of speaking of the providential order in terms of a necessity, while still making sense of praise and blame.⁴⁶ Plotinus then explains how this should be understood:

⁴¹ On these two treatises in general, cf. Thillet 2003, 46–54; Armstrong 1999, 38–41 and Bréhier 1925, 17–23. On the subject of providence in ancient philosophy, cf. also chapter 1 above.

⁴² *Enn.* *III.3.5.1–3*: [...] Γίνεται τοίνυν ἡ πρόνοια ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἰς τέλος κατιοῦσα ἄνωθεν οὐκ ἴση οἷον κατ' ἀριθμόν, ἀλλὰ [...] ἄλλη ἐν ἄλλῳ τόπῳ [...]. The same point, I take it, is made further ahead in terms of providence being the rational principle including all that is in, and all that comes down from, the intelligible world, in the pure soul as well as from there to living things, though not equally distributed. *III.3.5.18–20*: [...] τὸ δὲ ἐντεῦθεν ἥδη ὅσον μὲν ἔρχεται ἐκείθεν, πρόνοια, καὶ ὅσον ἐν ψυχῇ καθαρᾷ καὶ ὅσον ἐντεῦθεν εἰς τὰ ζῷα. Ἔρχεται δὲ μεριζόμενος ὁ λόγος οὐκ ἴσα [...]. On the issue of how the λόγος Plotinus speaks of here fits into the standard three-hypostases picture, cf. Bréhier 1925, 17–23, Armstrong 1999, 38–41, and Thillet 2003, 49–50.

⁴³ *Enn.* *III.3.5.14–15*: [...] ἔν δὲ ἐκ πάντων καὶ πρόνοια μία [...].

⁴⁴ *Enn.* *III.3.5.15–16*: [...] εἰμαρμένη δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ χειρόνος ἀρξαμένη, τὸ δὲ ὑπεράνω πρόνοια μόνον [...]. For the Middle-Platonist distinction between higher providence and lower fate, cf. Ps.-Plutarch, *De fato* 9. 572 f.–573b, who however, as Thillet 2003, 49, n. 156 points out, acknowledges three providences, or three levels of providence. On this view, providence moreover dominates fate and nature; cf. also Apuleius, *De Platone* I.12., and Atticus *fr.* 8 Des Places.

⁴⁵ The providence 'from above', and 'the other providence' are described at *III.3.4.11*: [...] πρόνοια ἡ ἄνωθεν, ἡ δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἄνω [...]. For the issue of the λόγος Plotinus mentions here, cf. the note above.

⁴⁶ Armstrong's 1999, 40, paraphrase of the content of Chapter 10 as 'Free-will and necessity', lacks any basis in the text.

But as for the necessity, this is not from without, but rather since it is universally. And as for the motion of the heavens, it is not such that nothing *depends on us*; for if the All was external to us, it would be just as its creators wished, so that, if it was gods who made it, men, even impious ones, would do nothing opposed to them. But as it is, this⁴⁷ originates in men. Given a principle, then, what comes after is executed as far as the sequence of the things included, and those of them which are principles, goes. But men are principles too, for they are moved towards the noble things by *their own nature* and this is a self-determined principle. (my italics)⁴⁸

Plotinus here states that the motion of the heavens is not such that nothing would depend on us (ἐφ' ἡμῖν).⁴⁹ He thus wants to avoid being taken to claim that all principles or causes of what happens lie outside us and are determined by the motion of the cosmos, i.e. to the effect that nothing at all is ἐφ' ἡμῖν.⁵⁰ Plotinus instead argues both that the sense of necessity referred to does not involve external force (acting on the soul), and that while the picture of an eternal sequence of things happening from the motion of the heavens is true, it does not exclude other principles. Notably, he points out that humans, or rather their own nature, constitute a self-determined principle.

Thus, if we extract a condition for something to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν from the passage, it would be that something depends on us if we are a self-determined principle (ἀρχὴ αὐτεξούσιος) of it. It is not made explicit in the passage whether this condition would be both necessary and sufficient. I take it, though, that it is at least a sufficient condition, given that otherwise the argument that something indeed does depend on us since our nature is a self-determined principle would not be valid. Presumably, it is also a necessary condition, given that the overall issue

⁴⁷ Armstrong 1999, 79 *ad loc.* adds a paraphrase, giving 'this [the power of free action] originates in men', but this makes no sense. The issue is not whether some 'power of free action' originates in men or outside men, i.e. in the gods, but instead simply whether 'what men, even impious ones, do' originates inside them or outside them, e.g. in the gods.

⁴⁸ *Enn.* III.2.10.11–19: [...] τὸ δὲ τῆς ἀνάγκης οὐκ ἔξωθεν, ἀλλ' ὅτι πάντως. τὸ δὲ τῆς φορᾶς οὐχ ὥστε μηδὲν ἐφ' ἡμῖν εἶναι· καὶ γὰρ εἰ ἔξωθεν τὸ πᾶν, οὕτως ἂν ἦν, ὥς αὐτοὶ οἱ ποιοῦντες ἐβούλοντο· ὥστε οὐκ ἂν αὐτοῖς ἐναντία ἐτίθεντο ἄνθρωποι οὐδ' ἂν ἀσεβεῖς, εἰ θεοὶ ἐποίουν. νῦν δὲ παρ' αὐτῶν τοῦτο. ἀρχῆς δὲ δοθείσης τὸ ἐφεξῆς περαίνεται συμπαραλαμβανομένων εἰς τὴν ἀκολουθίαν καὶ τῶν ὅσαι εἰσὶν ἀρχαί· ἀρχαὶ δὲ καὶ ἄνθρωποι. κινοῦνται γοῦν πρὸς τὰ καλὰ οἰκεία φύσει καὶ ἀρχὴ αὕτη αὐτεξούσιος. [...].

⁴⁹ *Enn.* III.2.10.12: [...] Τὸ δὲ τῆς φορᾶς οὐχ ὥστε μηδὲν ἐφ' ἡμῖν εἶναι [...].

⁵⁰ One might want to say whether this view is the Stoic, as Plotinus understands it, or not, but in fact there is nothing implying that he refers to a specific view.

is the existence of a principle internal to the agent as being necessary for the existence of anything depending on us.

It is noteworthy that the view Plotinus adopts here is more or less the same as in *On fate* (III.1), in that he counters a version of the Stoic universal chain of causes view with the idea of a plurality of principles or causes. Namely, the idea that our own human nature is a self-determined principle, so that something about the men who are being moved towards the noble things by their own nature depends on them.

The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν here seems to be general in the sense that the issue is whether something depends on us (all) (ἐφ' ἡμῖν) *qua* human beings. The remark is made in a discussion of causes or principles in relation to a universal rational order, and of how to spell out the details of how human agency fits into such a story. In this context, Plotinus thus gives as the condition for something depending on us that we have to be, or more correctly, that we have to have in us, a self-determined principle. The example he gives of a case where this condition is fulfilled is when we are led towards noble things through our nature, which is such a self-determined principle (ἀρχὴ αὐτεξούσιος). Still, we should be puzzled as to what notion of nature (φύσις) Plotinus refers to here. Particularly in the light of the dismissal of activity in accordance with one's constitution, and the granting of the noble actions of the wise as depending on themselves, due to their better nature, in *On fate* (III.1)[3], we should ask whether the notion of nature here in *On providence I* (III.2[47]) can reasonably be taken to refer in a descriptive sense to the nature of every human agent, i.e. in the sense of 'the common constitution of all agents of this type'.

6.1.4. *Conclusions*

As for the occurrences of the notion outside *Ennead* VI.8, then, it is evident that these are found in treatises dealing with associated issues, which is moreover in some cases indicated by the Porphyrian titles of the treatises, and in quite similar contexts. Following the Porphyrian chronological order, the occurrences of the notion are distributed from the early *On fate* (III.1[3]) over *On numbers* (VI.6[34]) to the later *On well-being* (I.4[46]) and *On providence I* (III.2[47]). It has been suggested by Leroux (1990) that it would have been more natural for Porphyry to include the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in the title of VI.8 than to give the title as we know it, and Leroux even suggests that Porphyry might

have deliberately avoided the notion in the title to avoid associations to Hellenistic schools, in particular the Stoa.⁵¹ Though the occurrences of the notion in the above-discussed treatises are less frequent than in VI.8, with the exception of *On numbers*, it seems safe to say that in the light of the tradition, these Plotinian treatises could as well have had the notion included in their titles.⁵² They in many respects are continuations of the Hellenistic debates about the compatibility of a doctrine of fate and our common notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν which made the philosophical discussion of the notion topical. Moreover, Plotinus' discussion of this topic outside VI.8 shows some particularly interesting features, which I will point out here.

First of all, in the early *On fate* (III.1[3]), Plotinus in Chapter 7 dismisses that having an impulse (ὁρμᾶν) determined by one's own constitution (κατασκευῇ) would be ἐφ' ἡμῖν, since this sense of 'having an impulse', in Plotinus' view, refers to things which are *enslaved to their constitution* and move according to it (ὅσα δουλεύοντα τῇ αὐτῶν κατασκευῇ φέρεται κατὰ ταύτην).⁵³ In Chapter 9 he specifies a condition for applying the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν to an impulse of the soul, and the condition for an impulse of the soul to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν is here that if the soul having the impulse has its own pure and untroubled reason ruling it, the impulse is ἐφ' ἡμῖν. He moreover states that only in the case of wise men performing noble actions does it *depend on them* to do it, while when non-wise agents perform noble actions, it depends on a range of other factors.⁵⁴ The conclusion from these observations must be that in the end, having something depending on oneself is only to be granted

⁵¹ Leroux 1990, 225 writes: 'En formant son titre, on aurait pu attendre de Porphyre qu'il reprenne le concept de 'ce qui dépend de nous', véritable pivot du travail conceptuel de Plotin dans la première partie du traité. Mais peut-être, pour des raisons qui ont à voir avec la crainte d'un rapprochement trop grand des doctrines stoïciennes ou hellénistiques en général, a-t-il préféré le laisser de côté. C'eût été néanmoins le seul titre cohérent.' On the titles in the *Enneads* in general, cf. H-S¹, *Praef.* XXXVff. On the variations in the title of VI.8 cf. the *app. crit.* of H-S¹, i.e. *Vita* 5.45–46; 26.24–25; *Pinax* 6.19–20; *Enneas VI Summarium* 12; *Enn.* VI.8. tit; VI.8.1.1. Also, Henry 1938, 27–28; Bréhier 1954, xv; xv, n. 4; 5, n. 2; Igal 1981, 140; Leroux 1990, 223–226.

⁵² It might seem that *On well-being* should also be taken as an exception, but given that later Stoics such as Musonius and Epictetus (see Chapter 4 above) had brought the themes of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν and what is the good life of the Wise man together, a Plotinian treatise explicitly connecting these issues comes as no surprise.

⁵³ *Enn.* III.1.7.20.

⁵⁴ The connection between this distinction and the statement that the wise men not only have 'the better soul, which has power over more' but also 'the one which is good by nature' (*Enn.* III.1.8.18: ἡ ἀγαθὴ τὴν φύσιν) is not entirely clear.

to the wise. The wise alone have impulses which qualify as ἐφ' ἡμῖν, i.e. impulses where the soul's own pure reason rules it, while the non-wise rather have impulses of the kind seen by Plotinus as merely cases of being enslaved by their own constitution. Moreover, the wise alone perform (noble) actions depending on them alone. The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν Plotinus develops in the treatise, then, can be identified as what we called an *exclusive use*, i.e. one in which only some things, namely those that involve a specific rational activity, and in a true sense have their principle in us, are ἐφ' ἡμῖν. It is moreover one which stresses that the noble actions of the wise paradigmatically depend on them. While an exclusive notion is found in many authors within the traditions analyzed in Chapters 3–5 above, both these features, and particularly so the latter one, pick up the notion found in the Roman Stoics, e.g. from Seneca and Musonius and onwards, notably the asymmetry, i.e. the emphasis on the fact that strictly the *correct* use of the impressions is what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

What we learn in *On well-being* (I.4[46]), while inconclusive, seems to indicate a slightly different understanding of the notion than in *On fate*. Plotinus here states that non-wise agents, when war-slaves, can perform actions that depend on them (i.e. are ἐπ' αὐτοῖς). The state of war-slavery, Plotinus seems to argue, puts such constraints on the non-wise agent that he is forced to act in a wise-man-like way.

In the late *On providence I* (III.2[47]), the understanding of the notion *prima facie* seems to be general in the sense that the issue is whether something depends on us (all) (ἐφ' ἡμῖν) *qua* human beings. Plotinus here again situates the notion in the context of how to spell out the details of how human agency fits into an account of the universal rational order. In this context, Plotinus thus gives as the condition for something depending on us that we have to be, or more correctly, that we have to have in us, a self-determined principle (ἄρχὴ αὐτεξούσιος). The example he gives of a case where this condition is fulfilled is when we are led towards the noble things through our *nature*, which is such a self-determined principle.

On the whole, then, Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν outside *Ennead* VI.8 on the one hand clearly tends towards an *exclusive use*, i.e. one in which only some things, namely those that involve a specific rational activity, and in a true sense have their principle in us, *are* ἐφ' ἡμῖν. On the other hand, the re-occurring references to *our nature*, as that in virtue of which we can be said to be causes of anything, and to have anything that is ἐφ' ἡμῖν (In *On fate* and *On providence*), is problematic for

this interpretation. This is especially the case in the light of Plotinus' denying that all impulses are ἐφ' ἡμῖν, on the ground that in some such cases we are merely enslaved to our constitution. The conclusion to draw from this apparent contradiction is, I take it, that these references to nature should be seen as references to a *normative* sense of nature. Notably, given that the majority of agents obviously, as it is, do not qualify as as having that nature, but only the wise, it simply cannot be a descriptive sense of nature. This particular notion of nature moreover explains why Plotinus not only speaks of the wise as having a better nature than non-wise agents, but significantly, as we have seen in the *descriptive* contexts, he avoids the term φύσις, and instead employs the term κατασκευή (constitution), e.g. when referring to things which are *enslaved to their constitution* and move according to it (ὅσα δουλεύοντα τῇ αὐτῶν κατασκευῇ φέρεται κατὰ ταύτην).⁵⁵

6.2. Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Ennead VI.8

While the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is discussed in several treatises, the treatise VI.8[39] is by far the one in which it is discussed in greatest detail. The interpretation of this treatise has, however, been much debated. In particular, the general issues of (i) the origin of the 'daring statement' (τολμηρὸς λόγος) introduced at VI.8.7.11, describing the One 'as happening to be as it is, and as not having the mastery of what it is',⁵⁶ and (ii) the relation of the statement to the overall aim and argumentative structure of VI.8, have a long history in Plotinian scholarship.⁵⁷ Still, the approach of the present study is that settling these questions, or even taking a specific stance on them, is by no means necessary for studying many philosophically interesting aspects of the treatise. This is not the place, then, to answer any of these overall issues regarding the treatise as a whole. Instead, I will in what follows focus strictly on Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in VI.8, and attempt to discern its features, in

⁵⁵ *Enn.* III.1.7.20.

⁵⁶ *Enn.* VI.8.7.12–13: [...] ὡς τυχοῦσα οὕτως ἔχειν, ὡς ἔχει, καὶ οὐκ οὔσα κυρία τοῦ ὅ ἐστιν [...].

⁵⁷ On the different ideas put forth as to the origin of the τολμηρὸς λόγος, cf. Armstrong 1988, 223ff. and 1982 (*passim*); Leroux 1990, 112–123. O'Meara 1992, 346; n. 8 suggests the starting-point of VI.8 is the issues concerning the gods raised by Alexander, in *De fato*, ch. 34, 206, 30–207,2; ch. 37, 211, 12–17.

order to then be able to say something about the similarities and differences compared to what we found outside VI.8, as well as with what we have found about the traditions before Plotinus in the preceding Chapters of the present study.⁵⁸ In this analysis of Plotinus' investigation of the notion in *Ennead* VI.8, the emphasis will naturally lie on the most crucial steps in his argument. Thus, I will not give anything like a complete commentary on the text, nor will I give an account of the entire treatise as such.⁵⁹

As was stated above in our preliminary observations on the notion in Plotinus,⁶⁰ in VI.8 he significantly goes beyond the traditional scope of the application of this notion, notably in discussing its application to Intellect and the One. *Prima facie*, it would seem impossible to apply the notion in the same way on these different levels. For instance, human agents typically engage in action, and traditionally, this is where the notion of something being ἐφ' ἡμῶν comes in. Intellect, on the contrary, is on the one hand in constant activity, but does not produce actions, and does not interact with external force, nor is it ever as such hindered by bodily constraints. Naturally, it is even harder then to see how the notion could be applied in the same way in relation to the One. In this section, then, I will attempt to clarify these issues regarding the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in VI.8. I begin with a brief outline of VI.8. (in section 6.2.1.). Then, I will analyze Plotinus' own discussion of the conditions for applying the notion first on the level of individual souls (in section 6.2.2.), then to Intellect (in section 6.2.3.), and finally to the One (in section 6.2.4.). Then, I will draw some conclusions regarding the similarities and differences between the application of the notion to these three levels (in section 6.2.5.).

6.2.1. *A Brief Outline of Ennead VI.8*

First of all, it is useful to get an idea of the overall structure of Plotinus' discussion in VI.8, i.e. of its different parts.

At the very beginning of the treatise, in a sort of introductory paragraph, Plotinus briefly states various issues concerning the notion. The question is asked whether it is possible to even enquire about the gods

⁵⁸ Cf. Chapters 3–5 above.

⁵⁹ For such detailed commentaries on *Ennead* VI.8 cf. e.g. Leroux 1990, 200–403; Harder-Beutler-Theiler 1967, 4b, 355–396.

⁶⁰ Cf. Chapter 2.

as to whether anything depends on them (ἐπ' αὐτοῖς),⁶¹ or whether it is rather the case that not just *something*, but *everything* depends on them (ἐπ' αὐτοῖς).⁶² On top of these two alternatives, Plotinus adds the possibility that having everything depending on him (τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ) is rather to be attributed to the One than the gods.⁶³ In the light of these issues, then, the objective of the treatise is stated as that of ultimately even enquiring in the same way about 'him who is on high above all things' to see what 'depending on him (τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ) means'.⁶⁴ However, the first step in this enquiry concerns ourselves, 'whether anything happens to depend on us (ἐφ' ἡμῖν)'.⁶⁵

This introductory paragraph actually more or less sets out the structure of the treatise, the main lines of which are thus (roughly): investigation of *a common definition* of what we take τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν to be (ch. 1). An investigation of *to what thing* we should attribute τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν (ch. 2–3). A defence of the view that *Intellect* is not enslaved to its own nature (ch. 4). An investigation of whether depending on oneself is only found in Intellect or also in individual *souls* active according to Intellect but engaged in practical activity (ch. 5–6). A presentation and a first refutation of the 'daring statement' about the Good (One) as being arbitrarily what it is and forced to do what it does (ch. 7). A preparatory statement of the ineffability of, i.e. the impossibility of applying any language to, the Good (ch. 8). Some special inadequacies: the expression 'it happened to be' (ch. 9). The argument that (a) chance is even later than and inferior to Intellect, and (b) although the Good is necessarily what it is, it is not *bound* by necessity but is the necessity and law of others (ch. 10). Further inadequate questions about the Good. E.g. the Good is not *in a place* (ch. 11). The argument that (a) that which gives freedom to substance itself must be still more free. Still, (b) 'master of himself' is inadequate language (ch. 12). A new approach: ascription of attributes to the One, 'for the sake of persuasion', while understanding 'as if' with every word. Thus, the Good is *master of himself* and is *as he willed himself to be* (ch. 13). The argument that cause and substance are one in the world of real being (Intellect), and still more in the cause of that world:

⁶¹ *Enn.* VI.8.1.1–2: [...] Ἐφ' ἔστι καὶ ἐπὶ θεῶν εἴ τί ἐστιν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ζητεῖν [...].

⁶² *Enn.* VI.8.1.4–5: [...] ἐπ' αὐτοῖς οὐ μόνον τι, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντα εἶναι; [...].

⁶³ *Enn.* VI.8.1.6–7: [...] τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ δὴ πάντα ἐνὶ ἐπιτρεπτέον, τοῖς δ' ἄλλοις [...].

⁶⁴ *Enn.* VI.8.1.9–10: [...] καὶ τοῦ ἄνω ὑπὲρ πάντα ζητεῖν τὸ τοιοῦτον, πῶς τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ [...].

⁶⁵ *Enn.* VI.8.1.15–16: [...] εἴ τι ἐφ' ἡμῖν ὃν τυγχάνει [...].

The Good is *cause of himself, self primarily, and beyond being* (ch. 14). He is *supremely loveable and love of himself* (ch. 15). The idea that when we attain to him we are far above chance, more than free and more than independent (ch. 15). He is *everywhere and nowhere, giving himself existence in being awake to himself* (ch. 16). Intellect is beyond providence, choice and chance, and its cause still more so, *by himself what he is, related and directed to himself* (ch. 17). The simile of the circle with the One as centre, being *as he wished to be and as he ought to be* (ch. 18). The idea that experience of the Good transcends language, and that he who made being has no need of being and is so *beyond it* (ch. 19). He is *eternally his own self-making, totally self-determined and at his own disposal* (ch. 20). The final statement that He is *his will, truly free and truly himself* (ch. 21).⁶⁶

6.2.2. *The notion applied to the level of individual souls*

In the traditions discussed in Chapters 3–5, as well as in the treatises of the *Enneads* discussed earlier in this Chapter, the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν was primarily applied to aspects of the individual agent, e.g. to the internal states, desires, or the actions of an agent as *depending on* that agent. In this section, I will analyze Plotinus’ development of the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν as applied in this traditional way, i.e. as applied to aspects of individual human agents.

6.2.2.1. Criticism of an unsatisfactory common attribution of τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν to wish (βούλησις)

Plotinus thinks that when investigating the conditions for applying the notion on the level of individual human beings, ‘one must first analyze what kind of thing one ought to say that ‘that which depends on us’ is, i.e. what the notion of such a thing is’.⁶⁷ The issue, as he states, is ‘what, then, are we thinking when we say ‘that which depends on

⁶⁶ This very brief outline largely follows that given by Armstrong 1988, 224–225.

⁶⁷ *Enn.* VI.8.1.16–18: [...] πρῶτον ζητητέον τί ποτε δεῖ τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν εἶναι τι λέγειν· τοῦτο δ’ ἐστὶ τίς ἔννοια τοῦ τοιούτου [...]. The point, he says, is that ‘thus it might somehow be realized if it is suitable to transfer it even to the gods, and still more, to God, or if it should not be transferred, or if it should be transferred, but one ought to investigate how ‘depending on them’ is to be transferred to the other gods and regarding the first beings’. *Enn.* VI.8.1.18–21: [...] οὕτω γὰρ ἂν πως γνωσθεῖη, εἰ καὶ ἐπὶ θεοὺς καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον ἐπὶ θεὸν ὁμοῦ μεταφέρειν ἢ οὐ μετενεχτέον· ἢ μετενεχτέον μὲν, ζητητέον δέ, πῶς τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς τοῖς τε ἄλλοις καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν πρῶτων. [...].

us', and why do we seek to find out?'⁶⁸ Plotinus, as an answer to this question states, I take it, what he thinks is the most common notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν:

I myself think that, when we are moved in opposite directions, by chances and compulsions and strong assaults of passions possessing our soul, we acknowledge all these things as our masters and are enslaved to them and carried wherever they take us, and so come to wonder whether we are nothing and whether there is nothing which *depends on us*, as if that would depend on us, which we would *do* when not enslaved to chances nor to compulsions or strong passions, and wished to, with nothing opposing our wishes.⁶⁹ (my italics).

Thus, the common notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν which Plotinus brings forth here could be formulated in terms of a necessary and sufficient condition, as follows: An action depends on the agent performing it if and only if the agent wishes to perform it and nothing opposes the agent's wishes.⁷⁰ The problem with this notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is, in Plotinus' view, that 'if this was the case, the notion of *that which depends on us* would be that which is enslaved to our wish and would happen or not to the extent to which we wished it.'⁷¹

From the point of view of the traditions before Plotinus, then, this seems like a dismissal of the inclusive condition for something being ἐφ' ἡμῖν found already in Aristotle, namely that something is ἐφ' ἡμῖν if and only if its principle or origin is in the agent.

Morover, Plotinus *prima facie* not only seems to dismiss the *inclusive* version of this condition, i.e. the one which does not demand that

⁶⁸ *Enn.* VI.8.1.21–22: [...] τί τοίνυν νοοῦντες τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν λέγομεν καὶ διὰ τί ζητοῦντες; [...].

⁶⁹ *Enn.* VI.8.1.22–30: [...] ἐγὼ μὲν οἶμαι, ἐν ταῖς ἐναντίας κινούμενοι τύχαις τε καὶ ἀνάγκαις καὶ παθῶν ἰσχυραῖς προσβολαῖς τὴν ψυχὴν κατεχούσαις, ἅπαντα ταῦτα κύρια νομίσαντες εἶναι καὶ δουλεῦντες αὐτοῖς καὶ φερόμενοι ἢ ἐκεῖνα ἄγοι, μὴ ποτε οὐδὲν ἔσμεν οὐδὲ τί ἐστὶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἡπορήσαμεν, ὥς τούτου ἐσομένου ἂν ἐφ' ἡμῖν, ὃ μὴ τύχαις δουλεύοντες μὴδὲ ἀνάγκαις μὴδὲ πάθεισιν ἰσχυροῖς πράξαμεν ἂν βουλευθέντες οὐδενὸς ἐναντιούμενου ταῖς βουλήσεσιν. [...].

⁷⁰ It might seem as if the use should be spelled out in terms of two conditions, one 'negative' (i) an action *depends on the agent* if the agent performing the action is not enslaved by chances compulsions and strong passions; and one positive, (ii) an action *depends on the agent* if the agent performing the action wishes to perform the action and nothing is opposing the agent's wishes. However, I take it that Plotinus means that (i) is included in (ii), or satisfied if (ii) is, since then presumably, nothing (i.e. nor chances, compulsions or passions) opposes our wishes. This is also indicated by the fact that he only brings up (ii) in the following discussion.

⁷¹ *Enn.* VI.8.1.30–33: [...] εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, εἴη ἂν ἡ ἔννοια τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, ὃ τῇ βουλήσει δουλεύει καὶ παρὰ τοσοῦτον ἂν γένοιτο ἢ μή, παρ' ὅσον βουλευθεῖμεν ἂν. [...].

the principle is in some sense rational, but he moreover dismisses the *exclusive* version of the condition, in which the principle has to be in some sense rational. This is evident if we take into concern the fact that wish (βούλησις) generally in ancient philosophy designates an (in some sense) rational desire.⁷²

More specifically, then, Plotinus' problem with this common notion seems to have to do with an ambiguity regarding the rationality of wish. Namely, wish (βούλησις), while being in some sense a rational desire, is yet not by definition rational in the more strict sense that Plotinus would acknowledge.

The reason for thinking so is not only that the following analysis, to which we will soon turn, on the one hand results in a criticism of Aristotle's position of what kind of awareness or knowledge should be demanded for an action to depend on the agent and to be voluntary, but Plotinus moreover (in ch. 2) distinguishes different ways in which a desire can be rational, and actually discards some of them.

Plotinus' critical attitude towards rationality, then, (i.e. distinguishing between different senses of rational, questioning some, while granting others as truly rational),⁷³ lies behind his dismissal of this initial common notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, including the condition that if an action or activity comes about in accordance with our rational wish (βούλησις) *tout court*, it is ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

6.2.2.2. A first revised knowledge-condition for the definition of ἐφ' ἡμῖν: general normative knowledge

Now, Plotinus immediately goes on distinguishing what is voluntary from what depends on us. While what is voluntary (ἐκούσιον) is everything we do (i) not being forced and (ii) knowing (what we do), what depends on us (ἐφ' ἡμῖν) is what we are *also* (iii) masters of doing (κύριοι πράξαι).⁷⁴

⁷² We know from Aristotle that βούλησις both depicts a wish for something that actually can happen as a result of an action by us, as well as a wish for impossible things, like immortality and what one could never do oneself. Cf. *EN* 1111b22–24. 'Wishful thinking' however, is not a problem for the common notion discussed here, since it assumes that the thing we wish to happen actually does happen.

⁷³ Plotinus' critical attitude (in the above specified sense) towards reason and rationality *tout court*, is well-known. For a classic exposition of issues concerning his view of discursive reason, cf. Blumenthal 1971, 100–111.

⁷⁴ *Enn.* VI.8.1.33–34: [...] ἐκούσιον μὲν γὰρ πᾶν, ὃ μὴ βίᾳ μετὰ τοῦ εἰδέναι, ἐφ' ἡμῖν δέ, ὃ καὶ κύριοι πράττειν [...].

The ‘also’ here would seem to imply that if something depends on us it is by definition voluntary, but Plotinus in no way assumes this. On the contrary, he gives examples where something depends on us, but is not voluntary. He states that while having different definitions, these two may both coincide and not coincide. His example of the latter case is taken from Aristotle:

[F]or instance, if one was master of the killing, it would not be a voluntary act when one did so, if one ignored that this man was one’s father.⁷⁵

Thus, if *x* killed *y* while ignoring that *y* was his father, *x* was *master* (κύριος) over killing *y*, so following the definition of depending on above, killing *y* *depended* on *x*, but, following the definition of the voluntary above, killing *y* was *not voluntary* to *x*, since *x* ignored what he did (i.e. since he ignored *to whom* he was doing something).

This would then be a case where the two did not coincide. This seems straightforward. But Plotinus then goes on to question these definitions. He adds:

But perhaps that ignorance would be incompatible with having something *depending on* oneself; and certainly the knowledge involved in a voluntary act must not only apply in the particular circumstances but generally. For why is the action involuntary if one ignores that it is a relation, but not involuntary if one ignores that one ought not to do it? Possibly because one ought to have learnt that? It is not voluntary not to know that one ought to have learnt, nor is what leads one away from learning.⁷⁶(my italics).

In other words, then, Plotinus suggests that the fact that *x* ignored what he did would be incompatible with the killing of *y* *depending on x*. This seems to imply that Plotinus first of all wants to show that one must add a specification of what knowledge is required in the condition for something *depending on* an agent. Particularly, he thinks that the knowledge (εἰδησις) demanded for something to be voluntary must be not only of the particular circumstances but also ‘generally’ (ὅλως).

As is clear from the only example he gives of such generally applicable knowledge, namely knowing ‘that one ought not to’ (ὅτι μὴ δεῖ),

⁷⁵ *Enn.* VI.8.1.36–38: [...] οἷον εἰ κύριος ἦν τοῦ ἀποκτείνειν, ἦν ἂν οὐχ ἐκούσιον αὐτῷ πεπραχότι, εἰ τὸν πατέρα ἠγνόει τοῦτον εἶναι [...].

⁷⁶ *Enn.* VI.8.1.38–44: [...] τάχα δ’ ἂν κάκεινῳ διαφωνοῖ ἔχοντι τὸ ἐφ’ ἑαυτῷ δεῖ δὴ καὶ τὴν εἰδησιν ἐν τῷ ἐκουσίῳ οὐκ ἐν τοῖς καθέκαστα μόνον εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅλως. διὰ τί γάρ, εἰ μὲν ἀγνοεῖ, ὅτι φίλος, ἀκούσιον, εἰ δὲ ἀγνοεῖ, ὅτι μὴ δεῖ, οὐκ ἀκούσιον; εἰ δ’ ὅτι ἔδει μανθάνειν; οὐχ ἐκούσιον τὸ μὴ εἰδέναι, ὅτι ἔδει μανθάνειν, ἢ τὸ ἀπάγον ἀπὸ τοῦ μανθάνειν. [...].

the knowledge he demands is not only *general* but also *normative*, i.e. in the sense of not only regarding general descriptions of situation traits of some type of situation, but also regarding what one ought to do in a situation of a given type.

Though this is not spelled out explicitly at this point, Plotinus hints that the reference to knowledge in the original definition of what is ἐφ' ἡμῶν is inconsistent, in that it demands one kind of knowledge (about particular, i.e. situation-specific facts) while not demanding another (general, normative knowledge about what one ought and ought not to do). Why should the first (circumstantial and descriptive) ignorance be significant but not the second (general and normative) ignorance?⁷⁷

What Plotinus builds on, criticizes, and develops within this paragraph is basically Aristotle's account of 'the voluntary' and 'the involuntary', primarily in *EN* III. 1–2.⁷⁸ However, as we saw earlier,⁷⁹ Aristotle gives no clearcut definition of 'what depends on us' (ἐφ' ἡμῶν).⁸⁰

Plotinus' criticism is directed towards the view that the knowledge demanded for an action to be voluntary, and depending on the agent, is only knowledge about the particulars of action.⁸¹ This evidently seems

⁷⁷ I take the seemingly moderating remarks at the end of the passage above, on why someone would think that it was natural to grant that only ignorance regarding what one ought to do should make an action involuntary, as added by Plotinus for rhetorical reasons, i.e. he does not commit himself to the intuitions behind them.

⁷⁸ That these are the texts in question is pointed out already by Bréhier 1938, 123f., though he does not analyze the references in detail. Aristotle's distinction between the voluntary and the involuntary, which forms the basis of his taxonomy of actions, is made in several ways: as a distinction between the voluntary (τὸ ἐκούσιον) and the involuntary (τὸ ἀκούσιον) at *EN* 1109b32 ff.; between actions, cases or just 'things' which are voluntary (τὰ ἐκούσια) and involuntary (τὰ ἀκούσια) at *EN* 1110a1 ff.; between acting (πράττειν) voluntarily (ἐκουσίως) or involuntarily (ἀκρουσίως) at *EN* 1111a28. Cf. Section 3.1 above. The notion of voluntary Plotinus discusses here is, I take it, only one of many notions of voluntariness acknowledged by Plotinus. For a thorough analysis of several sense of voluntary in Plotinus, cf. O'Brien 1977.

⁷⁹ In Section 3.1.

⁸⁰ O'Meara 1992, 346 points out that 'Plotinus furthermore believes (against Aristotle) that the knowledge required as a condition for voluntary action must cover not only the particulars of a situation but also general moral rules'. He also thinks Aristotle assumed the presence of the latter, though he does not explicitly claim that Plotinus misrepresents Aristotle. Cf. O'Meara 1992, 346–347.

⁸¹ As we saw in Section 3.1, Aristotle analyzed actions in terms of the particulars of the action and the situation. For example, involuntary actions done *through* ignorance (τὰ δι' ἄγνοιαν γινόμενα, 1110a1) are analyzed in terms of the agent having ignored one of the particulars of his action (1111a3), namely, *who* (τίς) is doing it; *what* (τί) he is doing; *about what* (περὶ τί) or *to what* (ἐν τίνι) he is doing it; *what* he is doing it *with* (τίνι) e.g. what instrument (οἷον ὄργανον); *for what result* (ἐνεκα τίνος), e.g. safety (οἷον σωτηρίας); *in what*

to refer to Aristotle's discussion of the particulars of action, but whether Plotinus takes this to be specifically Aristotle's view is not explicitly stated.⁸²

Plotinus' argument has at least two aims. It is meant to show that the relevant knowledge—for an action to depend on us—must be general (not just particular), and that it must be normative, i.e. about what one ought to do (not just factual knowledge concerning the particular circumstances of the situation).

Starting from a criticism of the Aristotelian understanding of these notions, Plotinus thus in the passage clearly develops a more *exclusive* notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, in that he adds a restrictive condition in the definition of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, demanding not only that the agent has descriptive knowledge of particulars of the situation, as demanded in Aristotle's notion of voluntary action, but notably, that the agent has a general and normative knowledge about how to act in the given type of situation.

6.2.2.3. The revised attribution of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν to wish (βούλησις)

Plotinus then again picks up the issue hinted at in his initial dismissal of the common notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν as what one does when acting according to one's wishes with nothing opposing one's wishes. As we stated above, his problem with this common notion seemed to be that wish (βούλησις) was not by definition rational in the right sense.

way (πῶς), e.g. gently or hard (οἷον ἡρέμα ἢ σφόδρα), (1111a5), and getting to know what he ignored, he regrets what he did (1110b20; 1110b24; 1111a20). Aristotle then restricts the possibility of ignorance, in saying that only a mad person could ignore all the particulars, and that no one could ignore who is doing the action, since he would then be ignorant of himself. Paradigmatically, involuntary actions by ignorance are done by ignorance of the most important particulars, namely *what* one is doing (ἢ πράξις), and the *result* for which one does it (οὗ ἔνεκα) (1111a16–18). Armstrong 1988, *ad loc.* asserts that Plotinus, though discussing rival theories, is not interested here in criticizing them, 'but with building up his own distinctive Platonic view of human freedom, that we are only truly free when we live on our highest level in the realm of the Intellect'. I would rather suggest that he is criticizing these theories for their problematic elements, to present his own view as accounting for these very problems.

⁸² As we saw in Chapter 3, however, we do find a definition of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Alexander, and even in terms of 'being the *master* (κύριος) of *x*', which was explicitly explained as meaning 'having the *power* (ἐξουσία) over *x* happening and of *x* not happening'. *De fato* 185.12–14: [...] διὰ γὰρ τὴν τοιαύτην ἐξουσίαν ἐστὶ τι ἐφ' ἡμῖν, ὅτι τῶν οὕτως γινομένων ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν κύριοι, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔξωθέν τις αἰτία. [...] & *De fato* 212.15–16: [...] τούτων γὰρ μόνων κύριός τις, ὧν καὶ τοῦ μὴ πράττειν αὐτὸς ἔχει τὴν ἐξουσίαν [...]. Cf. Section 3.4. on Alexander.

Thus, he goes on (in Ch. 2) to investigate *to what* we shall attribute τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, as it were making a fresh start. As is soon revealed, his understanding of this question is as *to what capacity of the soul* we shall attribute τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν.

The argument that follows has the form of a refutation of a number of suggestions regarding the answer (without indicating who the proponents of these views are).

The first suggestion is then that τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν is attributed to (1) *impulse or any kind of desire*.⁸³ The examples are, what is done, or not done, (a) by spirit or by appetite, or (b) by calculation of the beneficial accompanied by desire.⁸⁴ Plotinus' argument against this attribution is that if we ascribe it to (a) spirit and appetite, we will grant that something depends on children, wild animals, madmen, people out of themselves, people beside themselves (caught) by drugs and casually occurring imaginations, of which they are not masters (κύριοι).⁸⁵ Further, if we ascribe it to (b) calculation accompanied by desire, Plotinus points out that we would then include cases where the calculation has gone wrong, which seems unacceptable.⁸⁶

Plotinus then moves over to the suggestion that we attribute τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν to (2) *correct calculation and correct desire*.⁸⁷ Plotinus here points to the ambiguity as to whether (a) the calculation moved the desire, or (b) the desire moved the calculation.

Thus, in the first case (a), if the desires are according to nature, if in the sense that they belong to the living being and the composite, then the soul followed the necessity of nature, but if in the sense that they belong to the soul alone, many of the things which are usually said to depend on us will be outside it. In the second case (b) Plotinus asks

⁸³ *Enn.* VI.8.2.2–3: [...] ἢ γὰρ τῇ ὁρμῇ καὶ ἡτινιοῦν ὀρέξει, [...].

⁸⁴ *Enn.* VI.8.2.3–5: [...] οἷον ὁ θυμῷ πράττεται (ἢ μὴ πράττεται), ἢ ἐπιθυμίᾳ ἢ λογισμῷ τοῦ συμφέροντος μετ' ὀρέξεως [ἢ μὴ πράττεται]. [...].

⁸⁵ *Enn.* VI.8.2.5–8: [...] ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν θυμῷ καὶ ἐπιθυμίᾳ, καὶ παισὶ καὶ θηρίοις τὸ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς τι εἶναι δώσομεν καὶ μαινομένοις καὶ ἐξεστηκόσι καὶ φαρμάκοις ἀλοῦσι καὶ ταῖς προσπιπούσαις φαντασίαις, ὧν οὐ κύριοι [...]. The fact that Plotinus uses the term capable (κύριοι) in his objection might seem to refer to the abandoned definition that 'what depends on us' (ἐφ' ἡμῶν) is what we are (also) masters over doing (κύριοι πράττειν), but notably, while the former definition mentioned actions, here Plotinus applies it to appearances.

⁸⁶ *Enn.* VI.8.2.8–9: [...] εἰ δὲ λογισμῷ μετ' ὀρέξεως, ἄρ' εἰ καὶ πεπλανημένῳ τῷ λογισμῷ; [...].

⁸⁷ *Enn.* VI.8.2.9–10: [...] ἢ τῷ ὀρθῷ λογισμῷ καὶ τῇ ὀρθῇ ὀρέξει [...].

what bare calculation precedes our passions, which I take it is a merely rhetorical question which implies that he thinks that there is no such calculation.

Slightly cut of from the preceding cases, Plotinus adds some interesting remarks on the problem of 'being led' as such and asks:

Or when imagination compels and desire pulls us in whatever direction it leads, how in such situations does it make us masters (κυρίους)? How in general can we be masters (κύριοι) where we are led? For that which is in need and necessarily desires to be satisfied is not master over that to which it is simply led. But how in general can something be self-originated which comes from something else and has come to be as it is from thence? For it lives according to that and as it is formed by it; or in this way soulless things will be able to have something *depending on them*; for fire also acts as it has come to be. But if it is because the living being and the soul knows what it does, if it knows by sense-perception, what help is that to *that which depends on them*? For sense-perception does not give mastery of the work since it only sees. But if by knowledge, if it is by knowledge of what is being done, here too it only knows, but something else leads to action; but if reason or knowledge acts against the desire and gets the better of it, we must enquire to what this is to be referred, and in general where it takes place. And if reason itself makes another desire, we must understand how; but if it puts a stop to the desire and stands still and this is where *that which depends on us* is, this will not be in action, but will stand in Intellect; since everything in the sphere of action, even if reason is dominant, is mixed and cannot have *that which depends on us* in a pure form.⁸⁸

The above remarks, though somewhat brief, do give us interesting insight into what Plotinus sees as the issue here. His concern obviously first hinges on the fact that having a desire seems to imply that one is being led. Secondly, it regards the larger issue of any kind of what we

⁸⁸ *Enn.* VI.8.2.17–37: [...] ἥ τε φαντασία ἀναγκάζουσα ἥ τε ὄρεξις ἐφ' ὃ τι ἂν ἄγῃ ἔλκουσα πῶς ἐν τούτοις κυρίους ποιεῖ; πῶς δ' ὅλως κύριοι, οὐκ ἀγόμεθα; τὸ γὰρ ἐνδεές ἐξ ἀνάγκης πληρώσεως ὀρεγόμενον οὐκ ἔστι κύριον τοῦ ἐφ' ὃ παντελῶς ἀγεται. πῶς δ' ὅλως αὐτὸ τι παρ' αὐτοῦ, ὃ παρ' ἄλλου καὶ ἀρχὴν εἰς ἄλλο ἔχει καθεῖθεν γεγένηται οἶόν ἐστι; κατ' ἐκεῖνο γὰρ ζῇ καὶ ὡς πέπλασται· ἢ οὕτω γε καὶ τὰ ἄψυχα ἔξει τὸ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς τι εἰληφέναι· ποιεῖ γὰρ ὡς γεγένηται καὶ τὸ πῦρ. εἰ δ' ὅτι γινώσκει τὸ ζῶον καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ ὃ ποιεῖ, εἰ μὲν αἰσθήσει, τίς ἢ προσθήκη πρὸς τὸ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς εἶναι; οὐ γὰρ ἡ αἰσθησις πεποίηκε τοῦ ἔργου κύριον ἰδοῦσα μόνον. εἰ δὲ γνώσει, εἰ μὲν γνώσει τοῦ ποιουμένου, καὶ ἐνταῦθα οἶδε μόνον, ἄλλο δὲ ἐπὶ τὴν προᾶξιν ἄγει· εἰ δὲ καὶ παρὰ τὴν ὄρεξιν ὁ λόγος ποιεῖ ἢ ἡ γνώσις καὶ κρατεῖ, εἰς τί ἀναφέρει ζητητέον, καὶ ὅλως ποῦ τοῦτο συμβαίνει. καὶ εἰ μὲν αὐτὸς ἄλλην ὄρεξιν ποιεῖ, πῶς ληπτέον· εἰ δὲ τὴν ὄρεξιν παύσας ἔσται καὶ ἐνταῦθα τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, οὐκ ἐν προᾶξει τοῦτο ἔσται, ἀλλ' ἐν νῷ στήσεται τοῦτο· ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸ ἐν προᾶξει πᾶν, κἂν κρατῇ ὁ λόγος, μικτὸν καὶ οὐ καθαρὸν δύναται τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἔχειν. [...].

might call ontological dependence, e.g. the fact of depending primarily in the way one *is* on something external, as a problem for speaking of something as depending on itself.

Both of these concerns arise through the intuition that ‘being led’ as well as ‘being ontologically dependent on something else’ appear to exclude ‘being master’ of one’s activity, and thus τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν. It is noteworthy that these concerns do not deal with anything like ‘not being able to act or be otherwise’, but simply deal with dependence on something external, and the fact that we in this respect seem comparable to soulless things.

The issue here is then very similar to the one in *On fate* (III.1), discussed above.⁸⁹ Significantly, Plotinus dismisses the solution that knowing what one does, whether as sense-perception or as knowledge, makes human agency different in this respect, since these are merely forms of observing what one does, and thus are distinct from what leads to action. This again indicates that Plotinus, like in *On fate* (III.1), is interested in identifying a causal principle that cannot be found in e.g. soulless things.

Though it is not entirely obvious what Plotinus’ conclusion from the above list of candidates for the attribution of τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν would be, when summarizing the account in the following chapter, he concludes:

Now, we traced back that which depends on us to wish, and then placed this (sc. wish) in reason, and then in right reason⁹⁰

So, we should take this much of the previous discussion to be Plotinus’ own view. The rest we could *prima facie* see as problems either with alternative accounts or with Plotinus’ own account. The fact that he introduces Chapter 3 by saying that ‘we must therefore enquire about these matters’, apparently referring to the just-raised questions, indicates that these problems concern his own view as well, and cannot be left aside just yet.

⁸⁹ Plotinus here not only repeats the view but also the example, i.e. of fire, of his early *On fate* III.1 [3], ch. 7, that things merely having an impulse (ὁρμή) in the sense of being enslaved to their constitution (κατασκευή), do not qualify as having anything depending on them. Cf. Section 6.1.1. above. A difference lies in that Plotinus here does not use the term ‘κατασκευή’ but talks of ‘ὡς γέγνηται’ (how something, e.g. fire, has come to be).

⁹⁰ VI.8.3.2–4: [...] ἀναγαγόντες τοίνυν τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν εἰς βούλησιν, εἴτα αὐτήν ἐν λόγῳ θέμενοι, εἴτα ἐν λόγῳ ὀρθῶ [...] .

6.2.2.4. A second revised knowledge-condition for the definition of ἐφ' ἡμῖν: rational knowledge of why something is right

Plotinus then restricts what was said before (in ch. 2) by adding that the right reason he talked about belongs to rational knowledge (τὸ τῆς ἐπιστήμης). His point is that one must know why the belief one has is true, not just hold it as true and act on it:

[B]ut perhaps we ought to add to 'right' that it belongs to rational knowledge; for if someone had a right opinion and acted on it he would not indisputably have the power of self-determination if he acted, without knowing why his opinion was right, but led to his duty by chance or some imagination, since when we say that imagination *does not depend on us*, how can we put those who act by it in the class of the self-determined. (my italics)⁹¹

Moreover, again the Aristotelian condition for actions to depend on us employed in *EN* III. 1–5 (namely that the principle, a desire informed concerning the particulars of the situation, is in the agent) is dismissed by Plotinus as being too weak. Thus, Plotinus thinks that whether something the agent does actually *depends on* the agent, depends on *how* the belief, i.e. the agent's reason for acting, was formed. If the agent knows why the belief is true, that belief qualifies as a self-determined principle. Thus, Plotinus again shows an exclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Given the brief statements he makes, we cannot say whether this is meant to be an additional condition, i.e. an additional revision of the condition for something depending on an agent, or whether it is rather an explanation of the previous condition. In either case, Plotinus states here that the general normative knowledge referred to earlier as a necessary and sufficient condition for an action to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν in fact also involves knowing why one way of acting in a given type of situation is the right one.

⁹¹ VI.8.3.4–10: [...]—ἴσως δὲ δεῖ προσθεῖναι τῷ ὀρθῷ τὸ τῆς ἐπιστήμης· οὐ γάρ, εἴ τις ἐδόξασεν ὀρθῶς καὶ ἔπραξεν, ἔχει ἂν ἴσως ἀναμφισβήτητον τὸ αὐτεξούσιον, εἰ μὴ εἰδῶς διότι ὀρθῶς, ἀλλὰ τύχῃ ἢ φαντασίᾳ τινὶ πρὸς τὸ δέον ἀχθεῖς· ἐπεὶ καὶ τὴν φαντασίαν οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν εἶναι λέγοντες τοὺς κατ' αὐτὴν δρῶντας πῶς ἂν εἰς τὸ αὐτεξούσιον τάξαμεν; [...]. As Armstrong (*ad loc.*) points out, Plotinus elsewhere distinguishes between two kinds of imagination (IV.3–5; 27–29), i.e. φαντασία belonging to the higher and to the lower soul, respectively (IV.3.31).

6.2.2.5. The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν explained as what happens from a self-determined principle (ἀρχὴ αὐτεξούσιος)

In spelling out the additional knowledge-condition, Plotinus says that agents acting not from rational knowledge (i.e. of why their beliefs are right), but from e.g. impressions, do not have a self-determined principle (εἰς ἀρχὴν αὐτεξούσιον οὐ τάξομεν).⁹² Thus, he here spells out the condition for something, e.g. an action, *depending on us* as what proceeds from a self-determined principle, so that the following holds: An action depends on an agent if and only if that agent is a self-determined principle.

Now, this evidently reminds of the terminology of the later *On providence I* (III.2 [47]), where, as we saw above, Plotinus gave as the condition for something *depending on us* that we have to have in us a self-determined principle (ἀρχὴ αὐτεξούσιος). The example he gave there was how we are led towards the noble things through our *nature*, which qualified as such a self-determined principle (ἀρχὴ αὐτεξούσιος).

To summarise then, the kind of wish to which τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν was attributed was placed in right reason. This meant that it not only was based on a correct belief, but that it was based on knowledge of why one's belief was true. An agent acting from this wish qualified as acting from a self-determined principle.

One might still ask whether it was the belief or the wish resulting from it that was the principle? Plotinus implicitly answers the question:

[W]e shall ascribe self-determination (τὸ αὐτεξούσιον) to the one who, through the activities of the intellect, is free from the affections of the body—We trace back *that which depends on us* to the noblest principle, the activity of Intellect, and shall grant that the premises of action derived from this are truly free, and that the desires roused by thinking are not involuntary, and we shall say that it (self-determination) is admitted to the gods who live in this way.⁹³

Thus, Plotinus explains here how the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν is to be explained in terms of the agent having self-determination, τὸ αὐτεξούσιον. He restates that for an agent to have something depending on himself,

⁹² *Emm.* VI.8.3.17–18.

⁹³ VI.8.3.19–26: [...] τῷ δὲ διὰ νοῦ τῶν ἐνεργειῶν ἐλευθέρῳ τῶν παθημάτων τοῦ σώματος τὸ αὐτεξούσιον δώσομεν—εἰς ἀρχὴν τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν καλλίστην ἀνάγοντες τὴν τοῦ νοῦ ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὰς ἐντεῦθεν προτάσεις ἐλευθέρας ὄντως (εἶναι) δώσομεν, καὶ τὰς ὀρέξεις τὰς ἐκ τοῦ νοεῖν ἐγειρομένας οὐκ ἀκουσίους [εἶναι δώσομεν], καὶ τοῖς θεοῖς τοῦτον ζῶσι τὸν τρόπον [ὅσοι νῶ καὶ ὀρέξει τῇ κατὰ νοῦν ζῶσι] φήσομεν παρεῖναι. [...].

he must have self-determination, and this is spelled out as (i) (acting on) premises deriving from the activity of intellect (premises thus qualifying as free), and consequently (ii) (acting on) desires aroused by thinking (desires thus qualifying as not involuntary).

6.2.2.6. The notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in action

In Chapter 5, Plotinus brings up several problems pertaining to making sense of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in relation to action. Already in Chapter 4 he briefly hinted at a similar problem concerning desire:

But all the same one might enquire how what happens according to desire can be self-determined when desire leads one to what is outside [oneself] and has deficiency in it; for that which desires is led, even if it is led to the good.⁹⁴

This concern, then, refers to the fact that *every desire* in a sense is determined by an object external to the agent,⁹⁵ which seems to cast a shadow over even the desires aroused by Intellect, and the actions from which was called ἐφ' ἡμῶν earlier on.⁹⁶

In Chapter 5, however, the problem is posed slightly differently. The problem is stated in terms of how self-determination and depending on oneself can be present in the soul when it is active according to intellect and engaged in practical action according to virtue.⁹⁷ First, Plotinus states that while we are not masters of the *accomplishment* of actions, and while thus self-determination and depending on oneself would seem not to be properly ascribed to *the accomplishment* of action, in fact it should, e.g. with reference to acting finely and to all such *qualities* of the action coming from oneself.⁹⁸ The central problem, though, has to do with

⁹⁴ *Enn.* VI.8.4.1–4: [...] Καίτοι ζητήσκειν ἂν τις, πῶς ποτε τὸ κατ' ὀρεξίν γινόμενον αὐτεξούσιον ἔσται τῆς ὀρέξεως ἐπὶ τὸ ἔξω ἀγούσης καὶ τὸ ἐνδεὲς ἐχούσης· ἄγεται γὰρ τὸ ὀρεγόμενον, κἂν εἰ πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἄγοιτο [...].

⁹⁵ A similar emphasis on desires *qua* having external objects was found in Seneca, cf. Section 4.2.

⁹⁶ Plotinus then transfers this issue to the Intellect, and spends a chapter on solving it. Cf. below on the notion applied to Intellect.

⁹⁷ *Enn.* VI.8.5.1–3: [...] ὅτι οὖν ἐν νῷ μόνῳ νοοῦντι τὸ αὐτεξούσιον καὶ τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν νῷ τῷ καθαρῷ ἢ καὶ ἐν ψυχῇ κατὰ νοῦν ἐνεργούσῃ καὶ κατὰ ἀρετὴν πραττούσῃ; [...]. I take the issue to be *how*, i.e. rather than *if*, and thus the initial question Plotinus asks here (ὅτι οὖν ἐν νῷ μόνῳ νοοῦντι) is no more than rhetorical.

⁹⁸ *Enn.* VI.8.5.4–7: [...] πρῶτον μὲν οὐ πρὸς τὴν τεῦξιν ἴσως χρὴ δίδοναι· οὐ γὰρ ἡμεῖς τοῦ τυχεῖν κύριοι. εἰ δὲ πρὸς τὸ καλῶς καὶ τὸ πάντα ποιῆσαι τὰ παρ' αὐτοῦ, τάχα μὲν ἂν τοῦτο ὀρθῶς λέγοιτο. [...].

(virtuous) action always being *initiated* by external factors, of which we are not masters:

But in what way does this depend on us? If, for instance, because there is a war, we are brave; i.e., how does then the activity depend on us, when if war did not break out it would not be possible to exercise this activity? And the same goes for all the other actions according to virtue as well, since virtue is always compelled, in the light of the circumstances, to do this or that.⁹⁹

Plotinus moreover dismisses one plausible solution to the problem, namely:

If then virtue when it is active in actions is forced to help, how could it have that which depends on it purely? Should we say that the actions are forced but the wish and the reason which are before the action are not forced? But if this is so, by placing them only in what comes before what is done, we shall be placing self-determination, and that which depends on virtue itself, outside the action.¹⁰⁰

The above suggested solution, then, states that everything about the action is compelled, and that only what precedes the action, namely the wish and the reason, depends on us, e.g. depends on virtue itself. I thus take it that Plotinus here dismisses this suggestion, as too simplistic. Moreover, he does so in the light of the fact that making sense of how actions can be said to depend on us simply is part of his conception of the issue.¹⁰¹ While the above solution is probably seen by Plotinus as being, as it were, ‘in the right direction’, it is clear from this dismissal, and from the following discussion in the rest of Chapter 5, that Plotinus seeks a solution that makes sense of the intuition behind the initial common notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν of Chapter 1, namely that there is something about actions that depends on us.

⁹⁹ *Enn.* VI.8.5.7–13: [...] ἐκείνο δὲ πῶς ἐφ’ ἡμῖν; οἷον εἰ, διότι πόλεμος, ἀνδριζοίμεθα· λέγω δὲ τὴν τότε ἐνέργειαν πῶς ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, ὁπότε πολέμου μὴ καταλαβόντος οὐκ ἦν τὴν ἐνέργειαν ταύτην ποιήσασθαι; ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων πράξεων τῶν κατὰ ἀρετὴν ἀπασῶν πρὸς τὸ προσπίπτον αἰεὶ ἀναγκαζομένης τῆς ἀρετῆς τοδὶ ἢ τοδὶ ἐργάζεσθαι. [...].

¹⁰⁰ *Enn.* VI.8.5.20–27: [...] εἰ οὖν ἐνεργοῦσα ἐν ταῖς πράξεσιν ἡ ἀρετὴ ἠνάγκασται βοηθεῖν, πῶς ἂν καθαρῶς ἔχοι τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτῇ; ἄρ’ οὖν τὰς πράξεις μὲν ἀναγκαΐας, τὴν δὲ βούλησιν τὴν πρὸ τῶν πράξεων καὶ τὸν λόγον οὐκ ἠναγκασμένον φήσομεν; ἀλλ’ εἰ τοῦτο, ἐν ψιλῷ τιθέμενοι τῷ πρὸ τοῦ πραττομένου, ἔξω τῆς πράξεως τὸ αὐτεξούσιον καὶ τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτῇ τῇ ἀρετῇ θήσομεν. [...].

¹⁰¹ This might not seem entirely clear in this chapter. However, taking what we found in the *Enneads* outside VI.8, Plotinus seems wholly committed to the conception that the issue at stake is to show how actions can be said to be ἐφ’ ἡμῖν.

Thus, at the beginning of Chapter 6, he on the one hand first of all states the part of the preceding analysis that should be kept, namely:

If then what we are saying now is correctly said and what we said before will be in tune with it, we shall assert that virtue and intellect have the mastery and that we should refer *that which depends on us* and what is free to them.¹⁰²

The point, then, which Plotinus keeps from the preceding analysis, regards *to what* τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν should be *referred*, i.e. not what *is* ἐφ' ἡμῖν. He then moves on to spelling out the details of this part of his account, saying as follows about virtue in action:

[B]ut when compulsory passions and actions come in the way it (sc. virtue) has not in its supervision wished that they should occur, but all the same even among these it will keep its independence by referring back to itself even here; for it will not follow the lead of the facts, [...] having in view its own excellence and not the existence of what is subject to it; so that also in practical actions self-determination and *depending on us* is not referred to practice and outward activity, but to the inner activity, thought and contemplation, of virtue itself.¹⁰³

It is clear then, that already here the idea is hinted at, that while τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν is, in relation to action, to be referred not to the outward activity but to the inner activity of virtue, Plotinus is nevertheless committed to showing that there is something about our engagement in action that depends on us. Thus, this statement, specifying in what sense τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν in action refers to virtue, while maintaining that the activity of virtue entirely determines the way the virtuous agent acts, then opens up for a more sophisticated solution than the ones analyzed in the preceding discussion. Some lines ahead, Plotinus thus states explicitly what does depend on us in action:

So it is still clearer, that the immaterial is the free, and it is to this *that which depends on us* is to be referred and this wish which has the mastery and is by itself, even if something directs it by necessity to what

¹⁰² *Emm.* VI.8.6.3–6: [...] εἰ οὖν τὰ τε νῦν ὀρθῶς λέγεται, ἐκεῖνά τε τούτοις συμφώνως ἔξει, φήσομεν τὴν μὲν ἀρετὴν καὶ τὸν νοῦν κύρια εἶναι καὶ εἰς ταῦτα χρῆναι ἀνάγειν τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ τὸ ἐλεύθερον [...].

¹⁰³ *Emm.* VI.8.6.10–22: [...] προσιπτόντων δὲ τῶν ἀναγκαίων παθημάτων τε καὶ πράξεων ἐφροσῶσαν ταῦτα μὲν μὴ βεβουλεύσθαι γενέσθαι, ὅμως γε μὴν καὶ ἐν τούτοις διασώσιν τὸ ἐφ' αὐτῇ εἰς αὐτὴν καὶ ἐνταῦθα ἀναφέρουσιν· οὐ γὰρ τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐφύπεσθαι [...] σκοπὸν τὸ καλὸν αὐτῆς ἔχουσιν, ἀλλ' οὐ τὸ εἶναι τῶν ὑπ' αὐτὴν· ὥστε καὶ τὸ ἐν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτεξούσιον καὶ τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν οὐκ εἰς τὸ πράττειν ἀνάγεσθαι οὐδ' εἰς τὴν ἔξω, ἀλλ' εἰς τὴν ἐντὸς ἐνέργειαν καὶ νόησιν καὶ θεωρίαν αὐτῆς τῆς ἀρετῆς. [...].

is external. Thus, what (happens) from this wish and because of it, *depends on us*, both when it acts externally and when it is by itself; what it wishes and makes actual without hindrance, this primarily *depends on us*.¹⁰⁴

Thus, Plotinus states here that even in action, there is something that *depends on us*, namely that which derives from the wish which is identified with the thought and contemplation of virtue. Thus we might formulate as a condition for something depending on us: Something depends on an agent if and only if it happens because of a wish coming about through the thought and contemplation of virtue.

That Plotinus grants here that among the things depending on us are ordinary actions is clear not only from what he states in the passage, i.e. that it is added to the condition that it is valid for the external as well as the internal activity, but moreover from the last sentence, in which Plotinus refers to the initial common notion from Chapter 1, of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν as what is done when *nothing opposes the agent's wishes*.¹⁰⁵

The ambition to make sense of the notion in relation to action is then finally shown in Plotinus' summary of his own solution, at the beginning of the succeeding Chapter 7:

The soul, then, becomes free when it presses on without hindrance to the Good by means of Intellect, and what it does through this *depends on itself*.¹⁰⁶

6.2.2.7. Conclusions

To conclude, then, Plotinus in his analysis of the conditions for applying the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν to the level of the individual souls on the one hand, picks up what he treats as a common notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, referring it to wish, so that what we do according to our wish, with

¹⁰⁴ *Enn.* VI.8.6.26–31: [...] ὥστε εἶναι σαφέστερον, ὡς τὸ ἅνολόν ἐστι τὸ ἐλεύθερον καὶ εἰς τοῦτο ἡ ἀναγωγή τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ αὕτη ἡ βούλησις ἡ κυρία καὶ ἐφ' ἑαυτῆς οὖσα, καὶ εἴ τι ἐπιτάξειε πρὸς τὰ ἔξω ἔξ ἀνάγκης. ὅσα οὖν ἐκ ταύτης καὶ διὰ ταύτην, ἐφ' ἡμῖν, ἔξω τε καὶ ἐφ' αὐτῆς· ὁ αὐτὴ βούλεται καὶ ἐνεργεῖ ἀνεμποδίστως, τοῦτο καὶ πρῶτον ἐφ' ἡμῖν. [...]. Armstrong generally, but not always, seems to translate ἐφ' ἑαυτῆς as 'independent', which, I take it, has no basis in the text, and is also wrong. I have chosen the rather neutral expression 'by itself'.

¹⁰⁵ Plotinus, in fact, in the first lines of Chapter 6, explicitly picks up the initial common notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, saying, *Enn.* VI.8.6.1–3: [...] Πῶς οὖν εἰς βούλησιν πρότερον ἀνήγομεν τοῦτο λέγοντες “ὁ παρὰ τὸ βουλευθῆναι γένοιτο ἄν”; ἢ καὶ ἐλθέτω “ἢ μὴ γένοιτο”. [...].

¹⁰⁶ *Enn.* VI.8.7.1–3: [...] Γίνεται οὖν ψυχὴ μὲν ἐλευθέρᾳ διὰ νοῦ πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν σπεύδουσα ἀνεμποδίστως, καὶ ὁ διὰ τοῦτο ποιεῖ, ἐφ' αὐτῇ [...].

nothing opposing it, is ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Presumably given that the notion of wish traditionally is too ambiguous for Plotinus' demands, he dismisses this original notion. In preparing for his own account, he also brings up, and criticizes, a version of the Aristotelian position as to what kind of knowledge or awareness is needed for actions to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν and voluntary. Thus he dismisses the view that merely demands awareness of particular facts of the situation of the action. Instead, he first argues that general normative knowledge, i.e. of what one ought and ought not to do in a given situation, should be demanded for something to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Moreover, he specifies that this means not only acting from the right belief about what one ought to do, but that one has rational knowledge, i.e. of why this is the right way to act. In spelling out the latter point, Plotinus introduces a new way of describing the condition for something being ἐφ' ἡμῖν, namely that the agent must qualify as a self-determined principle. This formulation of the condition then corresponds to what we find in the later treatise *On providence I* (III.2[47]), where Plotinus also formulates the condition for something *depending on us*, in terms of that we must have in us a self-determined principle (ἀρχὴ αὐτεξούσιος). The example he gave there was how we are led towards the noble things through our *nature*, which qualified as a self-determined principle (ἀρχὴ αὐτεξούσιος), and which we interpreted as a strictly normative notion of nature. But here in VI.8, then, Plotinus, rather than referring to a normative sense of nature, spells out the sense in which we can be self-determined principles in terms of the general normative knowledge of what we ought to do in a given situation. Not surprisingly, Plotinus, after having gone through numerous problems pertaining to making sense of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν in relation to external action, spells out the condition for something being ἐφ' ἡμῖν with reference to the activity of virtue. As he carefully makes clear himself, the notion of virtue here is virtue *qua* thought and contemplation aiming at the perfection or excellence of the soul, and it does not involve any passions.¹⁰⁷ Thus described, his condition for something being ἐφ' ἡμῖν is that *Something depends on an agent if and only if it happens because of a wish coming about through the thought and contemplation of virtue*. Significantly,

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *Enn.* VI.8.6.22–24: [...] δεῖ δὲ τὴν ἀρετὴν ταύτην νοῦν τινα λέγειν εἶναι οὐ συναριθμοῦντα τὰ πάθη τὰ δουλωθέντα ἢ μετρηθέντα τῷ λόγῳ [...]. Plotinus thus does not 'count' the passions, however well-enslaved or well-limited they may be by reason. For various relevant aspects of the Plotinian notion of virtue, cf. Schniewind 2003 and Dillon 1996.

he takes this condition to apply equally well to the inner activity of virtue when it is by itself, as well as to cases where the circumstances forces virtue to engage in external action. Plotinus thus in the end picks up the initially dismissed common notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν which referred it to wish *tout court*. Plotinus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν on the level of individual human souls, then, while plausibly saving the intuitions behind a common notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, mainly that it should apply to external actions, and that it should make reference to wish, nevertheless spells out the details in much more technical detail. Significantly, in the light of the three traditions discussed in Chapters 3–5 of the present study, Plotinus not only develops what could be called an exclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, i.e. one demanding that for something to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν, it must have an in some sense rational origin in us. Plotinus in fact problematizes the sense in which an origin can be said to be rational, e.g. by distinguishing different ways of how reasoning comes about. He thus ends up with a condition that surpasses the conditions of e.g. Alexander of Aphrodisias (demanding rational assent), Chrysippus and the Early Stoa (referring to the co-causal role of human assent), and instead gives a condition demanding that the agent (i) is virtuous, (ii) thus thinks and contemplates, regarding e.g. what one ought to do, and (iii) when acting, is not concerned with the outer consequences of the actions, but with the inner perfection of the soul. Thus Plotinus, while pointing out that the outcome, *qua* quality, of actions, e.g. fine (καλῶς) in a sense is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, the kind of wish, thought, or contemplation of virtue that he mentions in the condition for an action to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν is not directed towards that outcome, but towards the inner perfection of the soul.¹⁰⁸ Given what we found in the preceding traditions, then, if anything, this account comes closest to the Roman Stoa, e.g. the notions of *in nostra potestate* in Seneca, and the notions of τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν in Musonius, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius.

6.2.3. *The notion applied to Intellect*

As we said above, Plotinus already in the introductory paragraph to VI.8 set out as the objective of the treatise to investigate if and how the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν could be transferred to among other things Intellect,

¹⁰⁸ The interpretation given here thus deviates in particular from the idea that Plotinus somehow elaborates with two notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, defended in e.g. Graeser 1972b, 123.

i.e. how that which depends on itself, τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ, could be said in relation to Intellect. In this section, I will attempt to state what the result of this part of his investigation amounts to.

To understand how Plotinus applies or transfers the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν to Intellect, it is useful to look at his solution to a problem pertaining not only to Intellect but to beings on lower levels as well. The problem concerns whether, in relation to something which is not being able to be otherwise than it is, or act otherwise than it acts, one can speak of its being and activity as depending on itself. In relation to Intellect, Plotinus states the problem thus:

And indeed one should also wonder concerning Intellect itself, whether, when (it is) just what it is by nature, and (acts) as it acts by nature, it could be said to have freedom and *that which depends on itself*, when not acting does not *depend on it*, And in addition, whether *that which depends on them* can properly be said about those who have no practical action.¹⁰⁹

Plotinus has, as we have seen both in VI.8 and elsewhere (i.e. in III.1), dismissed the idea that one can ascribe τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν to anything simply on the basis that it acts on impulse, since many such cases, e.g. fire acting, merely qualify as cases of things being enslaved by their constitution and moving according to it (ὅσα δουλεύοντα τῇ αὐτῶν κατασκευῇ φέρεται κατὰ ταύτην).¹¹⁰ It is then from this point of view that the problem in the passage arises.¹¹¹ In the present context, however, instead of speaking of being enslaved by one's constitution (and saving the term φύσις for references to the normative notion of nature), Plotinus here talks of being enslaved by one's nature.¹¹² Plotinus' solution to this problem, as regards Intellect, is based on criticism and a sort of revision of the notion of being forced or enslaved, particularly in relation to the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The first part of the argument then strictly deals with this revision of the notions of enslavement and force:

Now, where there is no compulsion to follow another, how can one speak of slavery? How could something borne towards the Good be under

¹⁰⁹ *Enn.* VI.8.4.4-9: [...] καὶ δὴ καὶ περὶ τοῦ νοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀπορητέον, εἰ ὅπερ πέφυκε καὶ ὥς πέφυκεν ἐνεργῶν λέγοιτο ἂν τὸ ἐλεύθερον ἔχειν καὶ τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ, οὐκ ἔχων ἐπ' αὐτῷ τὸ μὴ ποιεῖν. ἔπειτα, εἰ ὅλως κυρίως λέγοιτο ἐπ' ἐκείνων τὸ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς, οἷς προᾶξις οὐ πάρεστιν. [...].

¹¹⁰ On this expression cf. *Enn.* III.1.7.20-21 discussed above.

¹¹¹ This parallel becomes even clearer when, in his solution, Plotinus brings up the metaphor of slavery.

¹¹² As is hinted already by the expressions 'ὅπερ πέφυκε' and 'ὥς πέφυκεν' in the passage above.

compulsion since its desire for the Good will be voluntary if it knows that it is good and goes to it as good? For the involuntary is a leading away from the good and towards the compulsory, if something is carried to that which is not good for it; and that is enslaved which is not master of its going to the Good, but, since something stronger than it stands over it, it is enslaved to that and led away from its own goods. For it is for this reason that slavery is ill spoken of, not where one has no power to go to the bad, but where one has no power to go to one's own good but is led away to the good of another.¹¹³

Plotinus here interprets the notions of force and being enslaved in the light of two cases, (i) there is an external factor somehow determining one's state, not according to one's own good, but according to its own good, and (ii) one is in a state which corresponds to one's own good but one has no capacity of being differently. In Plotinus view, this far, if (i) is the case, then—and then only—is there a case of enslavement and force. Thus, if (ii) is the case, there is no case of enslavement or force at all. He then applies this revised understanding of the notions of force and enslavement to the expression 'being enslaved to one's nature' in relation to Intellect, in order to state how the activity of Intellect depends on itself:

But to speak of being enslaved to one's own nature is making two things, one which is enslaved and one to which it is enslaved. But how is a simple nature and single active actuality not free, when it does not have one part potential and one actual? For it could not be said to be active according to its nature as if its substance was one thing and its activity another if being and acting there are the same. If then the activity neither is because of another nor depends on another, how is it not free?¹¹⁴

The solution here, then, relies on the fact that Intellect is simply activity. Thus an underlying assumption is that for the problem to arise, there

¹¹³ *Enn.* VI.8.4.11–22: [...] ἥ, εἰ μὴ ἐτέρῳ ἔπεσθαι ἠνάγκασται, πῶς ἂν τὸ δουλεύειν λέγοιτο; πῶς δὲ πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν τι φερόμενον ἠναγκασμένον ἂν εἴη ἐκουσίῳ τῆς ἐφέσεως οὐσης, εἰ εἰδὼς ὅτι ἀγαθὸν ὡς ἐπ' ἀγαθὸν ἴοι; τὸ γὰρ ἀκούσιον ἀπαγωγὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἠναγκασμένον, εἰ πρὸς τοῦτο φέροιτο, ὃ μὴ ἀγαθὸν αὐτῷ· καὶ δουλεύει τοῦτο, ὃ μὴ κύριον ἐστὶν ἐπὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐλθεῖν, ἀλλ' ἐτέρου κρείττονος ἐφεστηκότος ἀπάγεται τῶν αὐτοῦ ἀγαθῶν δουλεῖον ἐκείνῳ. διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ δουλεία ψέγεται οὐχ οὗ τις οὐκ ἔχει ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τὸ κακὸν ἐλθεῖν, ἀλλ' οὗ ἐπὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἀγόμενος πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν τὸ ἄλλου. [...].

¹¹⁴ *Enn.* VI.8.4.22–29: [...] τὸ δὲ καὶ δουλεύειν λέγειν τῇ αὐτοῦ φύσει δύο ποιοῦντός ἐστι τὸ τε δουλεῖον καὶ τὸ ᾧ. φύσις δὲ ἀπλῇ καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ μία καὶ οὐδὲ τὸ δυνάμει ἔχουσα ἄλλο, ἄλλο δὲ τὸ ἐνεργείᾳ, πῶς οὐκ ἐλευθέρᾳ; οὐδὲ γὰρ ὡς πέφυκε λέγοιτο ἂν ἐνεργεῖν ἄλλης οὐσης τῆς οὐσίας, τῆς δὲ ἐνεργείας ἄλλης, εἴπερ τὸ αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι ἐκεῖ καὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν. εἰ οὖν οὔτε δι' ἕτερον οὔτε ἐφ' ἐτέρῳ, πῶς οὐκ ἐλευθέρᾳ; [...].

must be a clear distinction to be made between a nature that determines on the one hand and an activity that is determined on the other. The problem thus construed would then presumably arise in the case of e.g. a wild animal, the doings and desires of which are determined by its nature in the sense at stake here.

Moreover, there is the issue of whether the notion applies at all to Intellect. Plotinus here shifts to a sort of negative way of making sense of how it applies to Intellect:

And even if *that which depends on itself* is unsuitable language, but there is something higher than that which depends on itself here, even so it depends on itself because it does not depend on another nor is another master of its activity; nor indeed of its substance, if it is principle (of its substance). And even if Intellect has another principle, it is not outside it, but it is in the Good. And if it is active according to that Good, it (has) much more than that which depends on itself and freedom; since one seeks freedom and that which depends on oneself for the sake of the Good. If then it is active according to the Good, it would still more (have) that which depends on itself; for it has already what starts from itself towards it, and in itself what would be better for it, being in it, if it is directed towards it. (my italics).¹¹⁵

The stance taken here by Plotinus is that on the one hand the notion does not apply to Intellect. Though he hints that what is at stake in relation to Intellect is something ‘higher’, he does not spell out in detail why this is so. On the other hand, then, he thinks that the notion does apply to Intellect. This is mainly motivated with reference to Intellect not fulfilling the negations of the conditions he has specified for something to depend on itself, i.e. Intellect is master of its activity, since there is nothing else that is master of its activity. But this is also motivated by Intellect being ‘in its good’. The strongest intuition behind Plotinus’ account, then, is in the end that the notion not only applies to Intellect, but also applies in the purest form to Intellect.

In Chapter 6, Plotinus again makes a more precise description of the sense in which Intellect depends on itself:

¹¹⁵ *Enn.* VI.8.4.29–40: [...] καὶ εἰ μὴ τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ ἀρμόσει, ἀλλὰ μείζον ἐνταῦθα τοῦ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ, καὶ οὕτως ἐπ’ αὐτῷ, ὅτι μὴ ἐφ’ ἑτέρῳ μὴδ’ ἄλλο τῆς ἐνεργείας κύριον· οὐδὲ γὰρ τῆς οὐσίας, εἴπερ ἀρχή. καὶ εἰ ἄλλην δὲ ὁ νοῦς ἀρχὴν ἔχει, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἔξω αὐτοῦ, ἀλλ’ ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ. καὶ εἰ κατ’ ἐκείνο τὸ ἀγαθόν, πολὺ μᾶλλον (τὸ) ἐπ’ αὐτῷ καὶ τὸ ἐλεύθερον· ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸ ἐλεύθερον καὶ τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ τις ζητεῖ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ χάριν. εἰ οὖν κατὰ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐνεργεῖ, μᾶλλον ἂν τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ· ἥδη γὰρ ἔχει τὸ πρὸς αὐτὸ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ὁρμώμενον καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ [εἴπερ πρὸς αὐτό], ὃ ἄμεινον ἂν εἴη αὐτῷ ἐν αὐτῷ ἂν εἶναι, εἴπερ πρὸς αὐτό. [...].

But the contemplative, and the primary, Intellect (has) that which depends on itself in this way, that its work in no way depends on another, but it is entirely turned to itself and its work is itself and it rests in the Good, in want of nothing and being complete, and, as if living according to its wish; but its wish is the thought, but was called wish, because it was to its mind; for what is called wish imitates what is to its mind. For wish wants the Good; but thinking is truly in the Good. That Intellect therefore has what the wish wants, that by which it becomes thought when it attains it. If then we grant *that which depends on us* to willing the Good, how would not that which is already situated in what its wish wants possess it? Or else it must be assumed to be something greater, if one would not want that which depends on oneself to go up so high.¹¹⁶

Thus, Plotinus here again underlines the following features of how the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν can be understood in relation to Intellect: (i) Given its self-directedness, its work in no way depends on another, which is explained by the fact that—unlike beings engaging in practical action and whose work is thereby dependent on external factors, both as to the initiation and the accomplishment of actions—Intellect, *qua* contemplation, is its own work, and thus turned entirely to itself. Also (ii) Intellect rests in its own good, which is also spelled out as it lives according to its wish, i.e. being in that state which its wish aims for.¹¹⁷ Both these features, then, are in a way simply another way of stating that there is no distinction to be made between what Intellect aims at, strives towards, is directed to on the one hand, and what its activity is, on the other.

¹¹⁶ *Enn.* VI.8.6.32–45: [...] ὁ δὲ θεωρητικὸς νοῦς καὶ πρῶτος οὕτω τὸ ἐφ' αὐτῷ, ὅτι τὸ ἔργον αὐτοῦ μηδαμῶς ἐπ' ἄλλω, ἀλλὰ πᾶς ἐπέστραπται πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ τὸ ἔργον αὐτοῦ αὐτὸς καὶ ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ κείμενος ἀνεκδεῖς καὶ πλήρης ὑπάρχων καὶ οἷον κατὰ βούλησιν ζῶν· ἡ δὲ βούλησις ἡ νόησις, βούλησις δ' ἐλέχθη, ὅτι κατὰ νοῦν· ἡ γὰρ λεγομένη βούλησις τὸ κατὰ νοῦν μιμεῖται. ἡ γὰρ βούλησις θέλει τὸ ἀγαθόν· τὸ δὲ νοεῖν ἀληθῶς ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ. ἔχει οὖν ἐκεῖνος, ὅπερ ἡ βούλησις θέλει καὶ οὐ τυχοῦσα ἂν ταύτῃ νόησις γίνεται. εἰ οὖν βουλήσῃ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τίθεμεν τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, τὸ ἥδη ἐν ᾧ θέλει ἡ βούλησις εἶναι ἰδρυμένον πῶς οὐ τὸ ἐφ' αὐτῷ ἔχει; ἡ μείζον εἶναι θετέον, εἰ μὴ τις ἐθέλει εἰς τοῦτο ἀναβαίνειν τὸ ἐφ' αὐτῷ. [...].

¹¹⁷ Armstrong, *ad loc.*, rightly points out that in this passage Plotinus is playing with the common meaning of κατὰ νοῦν as 'according to one's mind', 'as one likes it' and the sense in the passage 'according to Intellect'. He however draws the conclusion that 'Plotinus, like other Greek philosophers, makes no distinction between thinking and willing', which, as I take it, is equally false in the case of Plotinus and 'other Greek philosophers', given the basic idea that wish, which is at stake here, is generally classed as a desire, even if in some sense a rational one.

6.2.4. *The notion applied to the One*

What about the application of the notion to the One, then? Plotinus, as we saw above, states in the introductory paragraph to VI.8. that the investigation should cover the application of the notion to the One as well. Notably, he first hinted at the possibility that *having everything depending on him* is rather to be attributed to the One than the gods.¹¹⁸ More generally, the investigation should aim at enquiring in the same way about the One to see what ‘depending on him (τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ)’ means’.¹¹⁹ The investigation of how this notion applies to the One only begins in Chapter 7, but it then dominates the rest of the treatise, or rather, as is soon realized, the rest of the treatise is a more generally aimed discussion of the possibility of describing the One at all.

As for the particular issue with the notion of τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ, then, Plotinus states the problem in Chapter 7 in the following terms:

How can one bring it (down to the level of) what depends on you and on me to which Intellect also was only with difficulty dragged, though it was all the same violently dragged?¹²⁰

The problem pertaining to the One, however, as we hinted above, is more specific. Rather than being difficult, transferring the notion to the One would seem impossible. The impossibility of describing the One in language is a general theme in the *Enneads*.¹²¹ Notably, applying language to the One, according to Plotinus, is a way of making it two, as he states in Chapter 13:

But if one must bring in these names of what we are looking for, let it be said again that it was not correct to use them, because one must not make it two even for the sake of forming an idea of it.¹²²

¹¹⁸ *Enn.* VI.8.1.6–7: [...] τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ δὴ πάντα ἐνὶ ἐπιτερεπτόν, τοῖς δ’ ἄλλοις [...].

¹¹⁹ *Enn.* VI.8.1.9–10: [...] καὶ τοῦ ἄνω ὑπὲρ πάντα ζητεῖν τὸ τοιοῦτον, πῶς τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ [...].

¹²⁰ *Enn.* VI.8.7.9–10 [...] πῶς ἂν τις εἰς τὸ ἐπ’ ἐμοὶ ἢ ἐπὶ σοὶ ἄγοι; [...].

¹²¹ It is generally acknowledged that Plotinus’ main view is that the One is ineffable. Yet many scholars have seen VI.8 as mainly theological, sometimes particularly as breaking the elsewhere defended ineffability of the One. Already e.g. Bréhier 1954, 119, states: ‘De l’aveu de tous les interprètes, ce traité est le plus ‘théologique’ de tous ceux qu’ait écrit Plotin’. See also Leroux 1990, 13, 38–39, 104–105, on the idea of VI.8 as giving a ‘positive theology’ and thus as departing from the ‘negative theology’ of the *Enneads* in general. Also, against this view, i.e. more in favour of a consistency in the *Enneads* on this point, cf. Armstrong 1988, 223–224; O’Meara 1992, 346–349; O’Meara 2000, 247–251; O’Meara 1990, *passim*.

¹²² *Enn.* VI.8.13.1–3: [...] Ἄλλ’ εἰ καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα ταῦτα ἐπάγειν δεῖ [οὐκ ὀρθῶς] τοῦ

Thus, the question arises that if now Plotinus holds this view about the One, even in VI.8, implying that strictly speaking, he is not going to grant that the notion can be applied to the One, then what is the point of the initially stated objective of inquiring about the possibility of applying the notion of τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ etc. to the One? One hint as to the answer is given by the problem challenging the Plotinian view of the One that Plotinus describes in Chapter 7:

Unless some rash statement starting from a different way of thinking says that since the (nature of the Good) happens to be as it is, and does not have the mastery of what it is, and is what it is not from itself, it would not have freedom, and its doing or not doing what it is necessitated to do or not to do does not depend on itself. This statement is indeed contrary and absurd and would altogether do away with the nature of the voluntary and self-determination and our notion of that which depends on us, as if this was empty talk and names of non-existent things.¹²³

This problem, then, states things about the One that would in Plotinus' view not only indirectly pose problems for our notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, but directly pose problems for his view of the One. The rest of the treatise as a whole in fact deals with various aspects of this charge towards the One. But as we already stated, Plotinus generally holds, even within VI.8, that it is impossible to describe the One. The rest of the treatise from this point of view, then, falls into two parts: on the one hand, Chapters 7–12, in which Plotinus mainly deals with the charge using the 'negative way' of subsequently denying that the One can be ascribed the attributes the charge ascribe to it; and on the other hand, Chapters 13–21, where he, while maintaining the ineffability concerning the One,¹²⁴ for the sake of persuasion,¹²⁵ develops an account of the One aimed at showing that the charge is groundless, and gives an incorrect account of the One.

ζητουμένου, πάλιν αὖ λεγέσθω, ὡς τὰ μὲν <οὐκ> ὀρθῶς εἴρηται, ὅτι οὐ ποιητέον οὐδ' ὡς εἰς ἐπίνοιαν δύο, [...].

¹²³ *Enn.* VI.8.7.11–19: [...] εἰ μὴ τις τολμηρὸς λόγος ἐτέρωθεν σταλεις λέγοι, ὡς τυχοῦσα οὕτως ἔχει, ὡς ἔχει, καὶ οὐκ οὕσα κυρία τοῦ ὃ ἐστίν, οὕσα τοῦτο ὃ ἐστίν οὐ παρ' αὐτῆς οὔτε τὸ ἐλευθρον ἂν ἔχῃ οὔτε τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῇ ποιοῦσα ἢ μὴ ποιοῦσα, ὃ ἡνάγκασται ποιεῖν ἢ μὴ ποιεῖν. ὅς δὴ λόγος ἀντίτυπός τε καὶ ἄπορος καὶ παντάπασιν τὴν τοῦ ἐκουσίου τε καὶ αὐτεξουσίου φύσιν καὶ τὴν ἐννοίαν τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῖν εἴη ἂν ἀναιρῶν, ὡς μάτην εἶναι ταῦτα λέγεσθαι καὶ φωνὰς πραγμάτων ἀνυποστάτων. [...].

¹²⁴ Cf. *Enn.* VI.8.13.1–3, quoted above.

¹²⁵ I.e. stating that 'But now, for the sake of persuasion, one must deviate a little from accurate thought in the accounts', *Enn.* VI.8.13.4–5: [...] τὰ δὲ νῦν τῆς πειθοῦς χάριν καὶ τι παρανοητέον ἐν τοῖς λόγοις.

In the first part, then, what we learn about the notion of τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ and the One is first of all that Plotinus thinks that the notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν does not regard the substance of anything, as he spells out in a first objection to the consequences of the charge:

For not only must the one who makes it say that nothing depends on anyone, but he must say that he does not think or understand this term. But if he did admit that he understood it, he could be easily refuted, because our notion of that which depends on us fits what he said it did not fit. For the notion is not concerned with the substance of a thing and does not take it as well into consideration—for it is impossible for a thing to make itself and bring itself into existence—but our notion wants to observe what among beings is a slave of others and what has self-determination and what is not subject to another but itself master of its activity, which is purely and simply the case with eternal beings in that they are eternal, and with those which pursue or possess the good without hindrance.¹²⁶

What we learn from the passage, then, is that self-determination boils down to being master of one's activity, and that Intellect thus has this in the purest form, and that also those (individual souls) that pursue or possess the good without hindrance have this mastery of their activity—presumably in a less pure form. Plotinus, then, during the remaining part of the chapter, briefly hints that he thinks that with this understanding of the notion of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, the charge can be countered. However, Plotinus in Chapter 8 launches the 'negative approach', stated as follows:

All the same, we could find nothing to say which is applicable to it, or even really about it.¹²⁷

This approach is, then, with some minor exceptions, in various ways applied throughout Chapters 8–12. Consequently the single thing we learn through these chapters is that among other things to be put away in the negative way in approaching the One is the attribute

¹²⁶ *Enn.* VI.8.7.20–30: [...] οὐ γὰρ μόνον μηδὲν ἐπὶ μηδενὶ εἶναι λέγειν, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ νοεῖν οὐδὲ συνιέναι ἀναγκαῖον αὐτῷ λέγειν ταύτην τὴν φωνήν. εἰ δὲ ὁμολογοῖ συνιέναι, ἥδη ἂν ῥαδίως ἐλέγχοντο τῆς ἐννοίας τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἐφαρμοζομένης οἷς ἐφαρμόττειν οὐκ ἔφη. ἡ γὰρ ἔννοια τὴν οὐσίαν οὐ πολυπραγμονεῖ οὐδὲ ἐκείνην προσπαραλαμβάνει—ἀδύνατον γὰρ ἑαυτὸ τι ποιεῖν καὶ εἰς ὑπόστασιν ἄγειν—ἀλλὰ ἐθέλει θεωρεῖν ἢ ἐπίνοια, τί τῶν ὄντων δοῦλον ἐτέρων, καὶ τί ἔχει τὸ αὐτεξούσιον καὶ τί μὴ ὑπ' ἄλλω, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τῆς ἐνεργείας κύριον, ὃ καθαρῶς (καὶ) τοῖς αἰδίοις ὑπάρχει [καὶ τοῖς] καθό εἰσιν αἰδίοι καὶ τοῖς ἀκωλύτως τὸ ἀγαθὸν διώκουσιν ἢ ἔχουσιν. [...].

¹²⁷ *Enn.* VI.8.8.6–7: [...] καίτοι οὐδὲν ἂν εὗρομεν εἰπεῖν οὐχ ὅτι κατ' αὐτοῦ, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ περὶ αὐτοῦ κυρίως [...].

‘depending on himself’, notably as being later, i.e. as pertaining to what comes after the One.¹²⁸

In Chapters 14–21, then, Plotinus ‘for the sake of persuasion’ while still, as we have seen, explicitly holding on to the ineffability view of the One, develops a series of attempts to give an account that shows why the charge against the One is unfounded. He is then careful to point out that he understands an ‘as if’ (οἷον) for every attribute that is ascribed to the One.¹²⁹ However, though Plotinus in this part of the treatise employs a number of the notions well-known from the earlier parts of the treatise, like mastery, lack of enslavement under another etc., he only applies the notion of ἐπ’ αὐτῷ to the One on one occasion. He thus states:

So, he is altogether master of himself since he has even his being depending on himself.¹³⁰

This, then, is what Plotinus’ application of the notion to the One, in the latter positive part of the treatise amounts to. The One has its own being depending on itself and is in this sense entirely master of itself.

6.2.5. *Conclusions concerning the application of the notion to different levels*

As a conclusion to the analysis of Plotinus’ investigation of the notion of τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν at different levels in VI.8, I will point to two main features, or rather tendencies, in his account.

First of all, Plotinus, in the light of the tradition, shares the majority view that an account of the notion of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν must include an account of what it is that is ἐφ’ ἡμῖν in practical action. Thus, as we saw in the section on the application of the notion to the level of individual human agents, Plotinus gives a detailed account of how everything resulting from the activity of the virtuous soul, both in its activity directed inwards, i.e. aiming at the perfection of itself, as well as in cases where its activity determines the quality of the agent’s practical actions, *depends entirely on itself*, and notably, in the latter cases, is in no way directed towards the external outcomes of its actions, but even then directed towards itself.

¹²⁸ *Enn.* VI.8.8.9–11: [...] ἀποτιθεμένοις δὴ πάντα καὶ τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ ὡς ὕστερον καὶ τὸ αὐτεξούσιον—ἥδη γὰρ εἰς ἄλλο ἐνέργειαν λέγει [...].

¹²⁹ Cf. especially *Enn.* VI.8.13.49–50: [...] λαμβανέτω δὲ καὶ τὸ “οἷον” ἐφ’ ἐκάστου [...].

¹³⁰ *Enn.* VI.8.13.10–11: [...] κύριος ἅρα πάντη ἑαυτοῦ ἐφ’ ἑαυτῷ ἔχων καὶ τὸ εἶναι [...].

Here, then, we can discern a serious attempt to save elements of a common notion of $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$, though naturally with particular Plotinian means.

Moreover, the quite strong conditions Plotinus specifies for something to be $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$ here makes him end up defending a clearly exclusive notion of $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$ which not only links it to rationality, but moreover excludes cases traditionally granted even by those having an exclusive notion of $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$.

Secondly, as was found in the analysis of Plotinus' investigations of the applicability of the notion to Intellect and the One, a significant re-occurring feature was the self-directedness of their activity, or their 'work'. This feature, as was already pointed out, is also found in Plotinus' account of the notion in relation to the individual human soul. Namely, the explanation for how there could be anything at all about practical action depending on us was made possible only by this innovation, i.e. that the virtuous soul is self-directed. In the light of the tradition, then, Plotinus, I take it, is the first one to spell out the notion of $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$ in terms of the self-directedness of the human soul.

Though evidently this is merely conjecture, given that the entire structure and argument of VI.8 deals primarily with the attempt to show how the One is not to be described as done in the charge against it described in Chapter 7, it is plausible to think that the feature of self-directedness in the account of the notion of $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$ on the level of the individual human soul stems from Plotinus' investigation of its application to Intellect and the One, rather than the other way around.

6.3. *General conclusion regarding the notion of $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$ in the Enneads*

Plotinus' notion of $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$ outside *Ennead* VI.8 clearly tends towards an *exclusive notion*, i.e. one in which only some things, namely those that involve a specific rational activity, and in a true sense have their principle in us, *are* $\epsilon\varphi'$ $\eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$. Plotinus notably employs the term *κατασκευή* (constitution), e.g. referring to things which are *enslaved to their constitution* and move according to it (*ὅσα δουλεύοντα τῇ αὐτῶν κατασκευῇ φέρεται κατὰ ταύτην*).¹³¹ In these as it were descriptive contexts, he thus avoids the term *φύσις*, and instead reserves it for nature in a normative sense.

¹³¹ *Emm.* III.1.7.20.

Along these lines, then, Plotinus not only talks of the wise as having a better nature (φύσις) than non-wise agents, but significantly, he refers to our nature as an example of the kind of principle in virtue of which we can have something ἐφ' ἡμῶν, i.e. by having in us a principle of the right kind. Some of these features are visible in VI.8. as well, but in VI.8. the conditions for something being ἐφ' ἡμῶν, are specified in much more detail, notably in terms of requiring general normative knowledge of what is right to do in given situations, including knowing why this was right.

More significant, though, are some entirely new traits in VI.8. Together with the traditional ambition of accounting for the way in which actions can be ἐφ' ἡμῶν, Plotinus, plausibly in the light of his investigation of the applicability of the notion to Intellect and the One, develops a notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in relation to individual human souls in terms of the self-directedness of the thought and contemplation of virtue, i.e. of the activity of the virtuous soul. This latter feature in particular appears to lack any precedent in the tradition of writings on τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, the main three tendencies of which were studied in Chapters 3–5 of the present study.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

The present study set out to investigate Plotinus' contribution to the tradition of writings on that which depends on us, τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν. This sort of historical and terminological approach was motivated by the confusion in the secondary literature which deals with the notion. Notably, the confusion was due to, on the one hand, a lack of systematic attempts to distinguish the notion from other related yet clearly distinct notions, and, on the other hand, the resulting confusion as to what sources Plotinus draws on in discussing this notion, and to what preceding accounts his position most closely resembles.¹ The present study thus chose to analyze the development of the tradition of writings on τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν before Plotinus, focusing on the Aristotelian, Stoic, and Middle-Platonist schools or tendencies.² The aim was to establish, for each of these major tendencies, the specific features of their notions of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, including points of continuity and of discontinuity.

Thus, within the Aristotelian tradition, there is a general continuity regarding what kind of things the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν applies to—namely actions. In Aristotle's employment of the notion of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν in his discussion of the distinction between the voluntary and the involuntary, as well as in the commentaries of Aspasius and the Anonymous commentator on *EN* II–V, and in Alexander of Aphrodisias, the general conception of the issue involved is that of accounting for the legitimacy of an everyday practice of moral praise and blame, with an eye towards the legal practice of punishment. Thus, there is agreement as to the scope of application of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, i.e. that the core issue is what makes an *action* ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The development, then, regards the analysis of the conditions for an action to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν. The standard Aristotelian condition is that *the origin of the action is in the agent*. In Aristotle, there is a possibility of reading into this condition both what I have called an inclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, one which includes every action that in any sense has its origin in the agent, in what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν;

¹ Cf. Chapter 2 above.

² Cf. Chapters 3–5 above.

and what I have called an exclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, one which only includes actions whose origin is in some sense rational. Aspasia and the Anonymous tend towards an inclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, although the Anonymous on some occasions thinks that for an action to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν, the psychological state that gives rise to it, must in itself be ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Thus, while they more or less preserve Aristotle's condition that *the origin of the action is in the agent*, Alexander, on the contrary, clearly develops an exclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, defining it as *what comes about with an unforced assent that is in accordance with reason and judgment*.

In the Stoic tradition there is less continuity, both as to the conception of what general issue the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν involves and as to what is taken to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Chrysippus' notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν appears to include acts of assent as well as external actions, though the core issue is what makes *actions* ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Thus, in his account, what makes an action ἐφ' ἡμῖν is that while the explanation of the action makes reference to external causes, such an explanation must also make reference to the assent of the agent. While placed within an entirely new context—an account of fate—the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν that Chrysippus employs still connects to the conception found already in Aristotle, that is, that an account of the notion has its main implications within the discussion of the basis for the praise and blame of actions. In the Roman Stoa, however, this conception of the issue vanishes. Instead, from Seneca and onwards, what is primarily ἐφ' ἡμῖν is strictly *the correct use of the impressions*, which is naturally also expressed in many other ways, e.g. as the works of reason, of choice, and of assent. This might seem to be already understood in Chrysippus' reference to assent, but other features show that as for the Roman Stoics the similarity is rather apparent. First of all, for Seneca, Musonius, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius, the correct use of the impressions, which is solely ἐφ' ἡμῖν, does not primarily refer to what we are 'responsible for', but instead refers to that by which alone we may attain a state of well-being, εὐδαιμονία, (one of the attributes of which is freedom, ἐλευθερία). Secondly, for the Roman Stoics, action is entirely excluded from what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, on the grounds that action depends on the body, which is subject to hindrance. The condition for something to be ἐφ' ἡμῖν, then, is that it is entirely unhinderable. The continuity within the Stoa as to the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν consists of a clear stance towards an exclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν, based on, among other things, an analysis, in different versions, of passions as having external objects, and thus as by definition being dependent on external factors.

In the so-called Middle Platonists we find, on the one hand, a common notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν that includes a number of specific features, and which is based on a specific way of answering the question of how to reconcile the all-inclusiveness of fate with a notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν and, on the other hand, some enlightening exceptions to this standard view. Thus, as an example of the latter, the early Philo of Alexandria simply operates with an exclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν which does not connect to an account of fate, but rather to an analysis of the basis of moral praise and blame, where things are ἐφ' ἡμῶν only if they have been or could have been subject to rational scrutiny guided by our intellect. Slightly later, Plutarch elaborates with a rather inclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν, and while connecting the notion to an account of fate, that account of fate is less elaborate than the standard Middle-Platonist one. Instead of speaking of an all-inclusive fate, then, he speaks of a tri-partition of causes, where fate (ἐιμασμένη), chance (τύχη), and human agency are neatly separated, and according to which that is ἐφ' ἡμῶν of which *we* are the only causes (αἰτίαι). In the standard Middle-Platonist account, the elements of which are found in Ps.-Plutarch's *De fato*, Nemesius of Emesa's *De natura hominis*, Calcidius' *In Timaeum*, Alcinous' *Didascalicus*, Apuleius' *De Platone*,³ and Maximus of Tyre's *Orations*, the main idea is that *all things* are *included* in fate. But significantly, among the things included in fate, some are included hypothetically, and are neither fated nor necessary, and among them we find what is ἐφ' ἡμῶν, while others are included as the consequences of things of the first kind, i.e. as consequences of agents performing any of the things which are ἐφ' ἡμῶν, and these are fated, i.e. they follow as stated by fate and are necessary.

Regarding Plotinus, an interesting point of comparison is first of all the one between what we find in VI.8, his by far most thorough discussion of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν, and the occurrences of the notion in other treatises. His notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν outside *Ennead* VI.8 clearly tends towards an *exclusive notion*, i.e. one on which only some things, namely those that involve a specific rational activity and in a true sense have their principle in us, *are* ἐφ' ἡμῶν. It is illustrative that Plotinus

³ While Apuleius' account certainly includes elements of the common Middle-Platonist views of providence, fate, and τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν it should be said that his tri-partition of what is to be referred to fate, what is to be referred to chance, and what to τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν resembles the similar tri-partition we find in Plutarch rather than the standard Middle-Platonist account which stresses that fate includes all things. The lack of detail in Apuleius, I take it, makes it difficult to say what is in fact lack of orthodoxy in doctrine and what is lack of orthodoxy in emphasis.

notably employs the term *κατασκευή* (constitution) when describing things which are *enslaved to their constitution* and move according to it (*ὅσα δουλεύοντα τῇ αὐτῶν κατασκευῇ φέρεται κατὰ ταύτην*),⁴ and which are comparable to us acting on any kind of impulse. In such, as it were, descriptive contexts, he thus avoids the term *φύσις*, and instead reserves it for references to our nature in a normative sense. Thus, Plotinus not only talks of the wise as having a better nature than non-wise agents, i.e. as performing in accordance with nature in the normative sense, but significantly, he refers to our nature, in the normative sense, as an example of a kind of principle through which we can have something *ἐφ' ἡμῖν*, i.e. by having in us a principle of the right kind. Some of these features are visible in VI.8 as well, but in VI.8 the conditions for something being *ἐφ' ἡμῖν* are specified in much more detail. Notably the conditions are first of all spelled out in terms of the requirement that the agent acts out of general normative knowledge of what is the right thing to do in a given situation, including knowing why this was right. More significant though, are some entirely new traits in VI.8. In particular, together with the traditional ambition of accounting for the way in which actions can be *ἐφ' ἡμῖν*, Plotinus, plausibly in the light of his investigation of the applicability of the notion to Intellect and the One, develops a notion of *ἐφ' ἡμῖν* in relation to individual human souls in terms of the self-directedness of the thought and contemplation of virtue, i.e. the self-directedness of the activity of the virtuous soul. Plotinus thus gives a unified account of how inner activity and external action can be *ἐφ' ἡμῖν*. Although initially only hesitantly emphasizing the external determination of all actions, including virtuous ones, insofar as external factors force the agent to act on a certain occasion, Plotinus then in terms of the self-directedness of the virtuous soul opts for the description of such cases as not forcing action onto the agent, particularly with reference to virtuous action as not being in any sense directed towards or performed for the sake of anything external. This feature of placing as a condition on what is *ἐφ' ἡμῖν* that it must come about through this sort of entirely self-directed virtuous activity, then, appears to lack any precedent in the tradition of writings on *τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν*. It might seem to be a development of the idea loosely expressed in Alcinoüs', i.e. that: 'The action, however, and what involves action, being carried out by the body, can be hindered

⁴ *Emm.* III.1.7.20.

and one would then act, when the circumstances demand, transferring into the habits of humans, what one has seen in the theoretical life.⁵ This, however, except for the fact that it is vaguely and tentatively expressed, and that the point rather seems to be that only the actions we perform when not hindered depend on us, lacks the specific idea Plotinus develops. This idea is namely that the soul must be entirely self-directed in order to have anything depending on itself, for the precise reason that in all other cases the origins not only of our actions but of our reasonings as well are external.

In the light of the tradition of writings on τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, then, one can discern several interesting features in Plotinus' discussion of the notion.

As to the Aristotelian condition for action being ἐφ' ἡμῶν, namely that *the origin of the action is in the agent*, Aristotle, together with Aspasius, is vague as to what this implies. The Anonymous Aristotelian commentator plays with the idea of replacing this condition with the condition that the origin as such is ἐπὶ the agent, and Alexander instead explicitly opts for the exclusive understanding of the condition, spelling out the reference to origin as *an unforced assent that is in accordance with reason and judgment*. Such an exclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν also prevails in the Stoa, although the Roman Stoics opt for a condition of 'unhinderability' leading them to generally exclude action as such from what can be ἐφ' ἡμῶν. Though the awareness of action as subject to hindrance is present in the Middle Platonists as well, they generally do not exclude action. Moreover, they generally tend rather towards an inclusive notion of ἐφ' ἡμῶν. Plotinus, then, in this respect not only argues for an exclusive understanding of the Aristotelian condition, but questions the idea present both in the Stoics and in Alexander: that applying our rational faculties to the impressions coming from the outside suffices to make the resulting reasonings and actions ἐφ' ἡμῶν. There are two aspects of this criticism: Namely that he (i) demands not only rational deliberation and decision concerning the particular situational facts for an action to be ἐφ' ἡμῶν, but general normative knowledge of what one ought to do in the situation; and moreover, that (ii) the virtuous activity is in no way carried out for the sake of the external situational facts, but for the sake of the inner perfection of the soul alone.

⁵ *Did.* 153.12–15: [...] Ἡ μέντοι πρᾶξις καὶ τὸ πρακτικὸν διὰ τοῦ σώματος περαινώμενα κωλυθῆναι τε δύναιται καὶ πρᾶττοιο ἂν ἀπαιτούντων τῶν πραγμάτων, ἃ κατὰ τὸν θεωρητικὸν βίον ὁρᾶται, μελετῆσαι εἰς ἀνθρώπων ἥθη. [...].

As to the conception of what issues the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν involves, as we have seen, there are mainly two tendencies within the tradition of writings on τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν before Plotinus. On the one hand, the conception that an account of the conditions for actions being ἐφ' ἡμῖν is necessary for our practice of praise and blame to be well-founded, and on the other hand, the conception that a correct understanding of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν is necessary for us to attain a state of well-being. Evidently, someone might very well defend the first and yet see it as forming a part of the second. Notably, this could, in a way, be said about Aristotle in the *EN*. However, the matter is one of emphasize. In addition, in the Roman Stoics the emphasis is such that the first issue practically vanishes. A difference, then, between these two conceptions appears to be that the first one does not link the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν as such to virtue, even though an account from that conception might very well grant that virtue is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, while the second often includes a close connection to the state of virtue. In this respect, Plotinus, especially in VI.8, on the one hand shares with the first conception of the issue as one of praise and blame, the idea that an account of the notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν has to make sense of how action is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, but on the other hand, tends towards a strong version of the other conception. Still, there is a clear difference between Plotinus' position and the Roman Stoa in this matter, namely, that while the Roman Stoics generally speak in terms of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν as a class of things equally accessible to all agents, regardless of their degree of virtue, this is not the case in Plotinus. What Plotinus ends up defending is a notion of ἐφ' ἡμῖν which states that only the activities of the virtuous agent can be ἐφ' ἡμῖν. Thus, it is clear that in Plotinus, this notion no longer relates to the issue of what makes our practice of praise and blame well-founded, but is rather an aspect of the life of the perfectly virtuous agent.

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